

# Milton Remembers World War II

1939-1945



Written by Ken Lamb

Published by Milton Historical Society  
Pte. Joe Waters Branch 136, Milton Ont.



with the support of Royal Canadian Legion





# CANADA REMEMBERS LE CANADA SE SOUVIENT

**Published by Milton Historical Society**

**with the support of Royal Canadian Legion, Pte. Joe Waters Branch 136, Milton, Ont.**



# Dedication

This book is dedicated by us in Milton:

- ☼ to the memory of those who paid the supreme sacrifice
- ☼ to the honour of all those who served
- ☼ and to the recognition of those who provided  
community support in the defence of a  
democratic way of life during a global war, 1939-1945

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credit to the publication and the  
publisher.

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to commemorate the 50th anniversary  
of the end of the war in Europe.

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# Preface

This book is a joint effort of the Milton Historical Society and the Private Joe Waters Branch 136 of The Royal Canadian Legion.

We in the Historical Society began the venture as an archival project to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War. We planned to interview veterans and others about their wartime memories and to retain the tapes and transcripts for future generations. We felt this would give a local perspective to recognized war texts. But more than that we prayed that the people we wrote about would turn out to be the last generation to fight a global war.

Some had warned us that most veterans would be reluctant to talk about their experiences. Not at all. Everyone we approached readily agreed to take part; many told us that the war had played a big part in shaping their lives. And we sensed that they saw themselves as players on the world stage and wanted their roles to live after them.

It soon became clear that our work complemented the efforts carried out over many years by Legion Branch 136 in compiling service records of people in and around Milton. These identify more than 500 men and women who joined the services from the

extended Milton area. More than 30 were killed.

When we proposed that our respective efforts should be combined in a book the Legion quickly endorsed the idea. Legion members – especially Bruce MacNab, Ed Goodall and Dick Clement – gave valuable advice and strong research help.

Financial support of the Legion made it possible to publish this book.

*- Ken Lamb*



# Contents

<b>Dedication .....</b>	<b>2</b>	Marsh, Stan .....	101
<b>Preface .....</b>	<b>3</b>	Marshall, Ken .....	64
<b>Contents .....</b>	<b>4</b>	McTrach, John .....	78
<b>Experiences Shared .....</b>	<b>5</b>	Ramsden, Rodney .....	88
Clement, Dick .....	6	Robinson, Marg .....	98
Clements, Marie .....	45	Sproat, Jim .....	101
Cooper, Art .....	16	<b>War Brides Enriched Canada .....</b>	<b>102</b>
Dales, Lyle .....	63	<b>Community Scrapbook .....</b>	<b>105</b>
Dawkins, Jack .....	20	Milton in the 1940s .....	106
Dick, Edith .....	100	Milton family stories .....	112
Hassard, Ken .....	28	<b>Those Who Served .....</b>	<b>123</b>
Havard, Barb & Lorne .....	32	<b>Those Lost in Service .....</b>	<b>131</b>
James, Ken .....	38	<b>Historical Notes on Royal Canadian Legion, Joe Waters Branch 136 .....</b>	<b>140</b>
Kitchen, Bruce .....	46	<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>141</b>
Ledwith, Mike .....	56		
Leggo, Harvey .....	67		
Lenk, Siegfried .....	83		
Lorenz, Nelly .....	58		
MacNab, Bruce .....	68		

## Cover Photo

The picture of long-time bugler Joe Waters at the Milton Cenotaph was taken in 1966.





*At Camp Borden in 1940 in the back are Scotty Peppers, Sid Robins, Pinky Coxe, Bus Wilson, Jack Arnold. In front: Harvey Brush, Huck Kelman, Bud Homewood, unidentified, Wilf Wilson.*

# Experiences shared



*Ontario Tank Regiment leads a victory parade into a Dutch town. Just behind the man giving the salute is Sergeant Dick Martin.*

World War II had many faces and countless experiences. Those experiences were indelibly stamped on the lives of those who lived through them. Today's Miltonians share theirs in the following pages. They are representative of the services and groups who were touched by that global conflict.

## *An infantryman, Dick Clement found the shovel was his best friend*



**Dick Clement**  
*at Camp Borden 1941 taking ski training with full pack. Dick's parents came to the Milton area in 1908 from London, England.*

**D**ICK CLEMENT SERVED ALMOST SIX YEARS in The Irish Regiment of Canada, an infantry unit. He's immensely proud of that record. And he's doing all he can to make sure his story will live on for future generations.

Dick has put together four scrapbooks about his own career and the experiences of other Miltonians. He has spoken to local high school assemblies and service clubs. His photos number in the hundreds. He has a small library of books about the Italian campaign and other World War II topics. His reputation as a raconteur has spread well beyond his friends in the Canadian Legion.

Dick keeps in close touch with his army buddies; a Regimental newsletter brings news of wartime comrades. Within two years of the war's end, the Regiment set up an association. There has been a re-union each year since.

It started at Fort York Armouries and when the number of survivors declined, the event moved to the Royal York Hotel the last Saturday in September. It is called the Coriano Dinner after the costly 1944 battle.

Each Dec. 19 he goes to a memorial dinner with Bert Snow, brother of Jim, the former Provincial cabinet minister. Bert was wounded in Italy Dec. 19, 1944.

Dick survived heavy fighting in Italy and Holland without a scratch. His good luck, however, deserted him after the armistice; a jeep overturned while being driven by a soldier who celebrated too well.

A head injury kept Dick in bed for two weeks. He should have been in hospital but he declined because he didn't want anything to delay his homecoming. Instead a medical orderly looked after him in a hotel.

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*Dick helped the Irish Regiment of Canada earn an envied reputation.*

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Dick probably wasn't listed officially as a war casualty. But more than 700 of The Irish Regiment of Canada appear in those records; 200 of them died. Almost 90 became prisoners-of-war.

### **Getting Ready**

It all started for Dick, as for many thousands of others, at the "Horse Palace" in the Canadian National Exhibition grounds in Toronto.

"I will never forget the smell of that place," Dick swears.

After a year of training – mostly at Camp Borden – Dick was on his way to Nova Scotia for shore patrol. At Montreal, however, the trip was broken up with a six-day, 120 mile march to Three Rivers (Trois Rivières).

"That was a type of recruiting drive," he says, "but we didn't seem to get many recruits. The only casualty was Captain Kilkenny, the regimental mascot, an Irish wolfhound. The Captain was buried with appropriate honours."

Dick remembers the lonely shore patrols – two men patrolling a three-mile stretch 24 hours a day. The air was thick with rumours of submarines but Dick didn't see one, nor did any other soldier in the regiment.

"That was a long, lonely time," Dick recalls. "We also met a lot of kindly people down there; after the war we returned twice to look up some of the people we knew."

"We left Nova Scotia on Hallowe'en, 1942. We crossed the ocean on the *Queen Elizabeth* in a little under five days."

The regiment trained at several camps in England. Dick remembers extensive manoeuvres when stationed near Tunbridge Wells moving across the country in convoys and learning how to adapt to tanks and live ammunition fire.



At King's Lynn in Norfolk the regiment had a far different experience. They were picked to mount the guard for the King and Queen at Sandringham Castle.

#### Luxury Travel

A year after arriving in England the regiment found itself in Liverpool, boarding a ship with no idea where it was headed.

"By good luck we were on one of the bigger boats in the convoy, the American luxury liner *Monterey*. Today it is still being used as a cruise ship under the name *SS Britanis*.

"The *Monterey* was fully equipped with American rations. We were in the lap of luxury. Two meals a day and what meals they were! Steak, ice cream – anything you wanted.

"Unfortunately about three days out of Liverpool it got pretty rough. A lot of the boys couldn't eat – they were very sick. Those of us who were lucky had twice as much to eat.

"The convoy had just passed through the Straits of Gibraltar when The Irish Regiment got its first taste of enemy action.

"There was a torpedo-bomber attack on the convoy about 6 p.m. and the two boats next to us were sunk, the *Santa Elena* and a Greek munitions ship. On the *Santa Elena* there was a contingent of nurses and a full hospital organization.

#### Amazing Rescue

"We picked up survivors until midnight. Two of the survivors are right in Halton today – Albert Downs in Milton and Hank McCraney, Oakville.

"The military people claimed there were no lives lost in

the sinking. But I could not believe that because when we left the scene at 12 o'clock at night we could still hear people in the water hollering for help." (1300 were rescued.)

The regiment landed at Naples in early November, 1943 – four months after the 1st Division had landed in Sicily and fought its way up the Adriatic coast.

At a Christmas get-together Brigadier Kitching offered a bottle of whiskey as a prize to the first unit to capture a German prisoner. Dick's regiment claimed the prize although the prisoner died of wounds shortly after capture. Dick doesn't remember getting a sip of the prize.

He also doesn't recall whether the luckless German

*The Irish Regiment on parade  
in Toronto 1940.*



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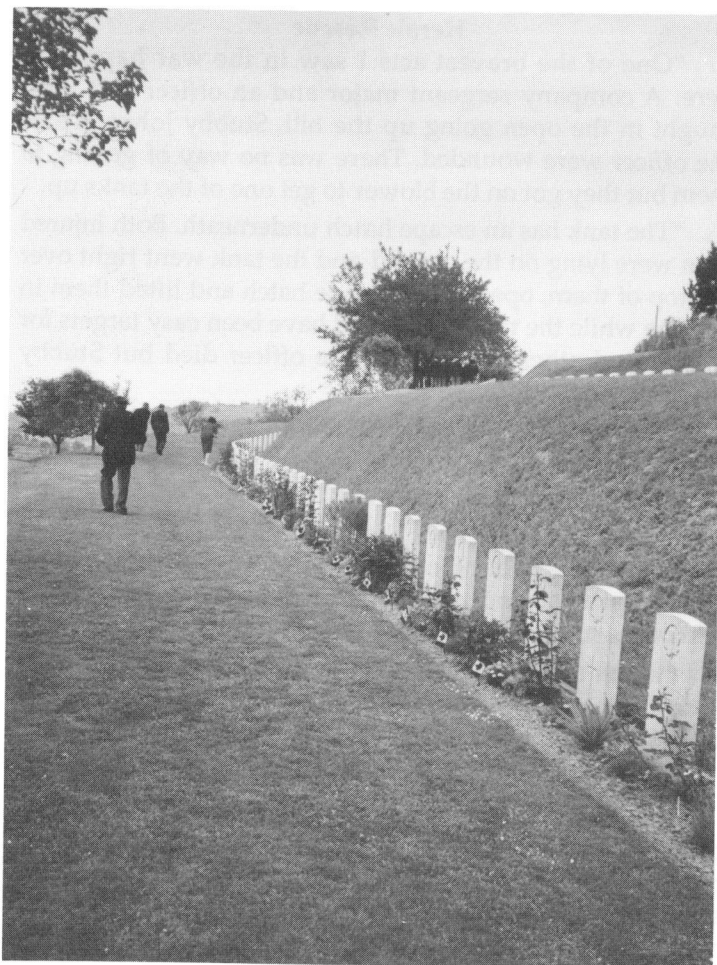
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*The Irish Regiment on parade  
in Toronto 1940.*





*Coriano*

Ab wanted Dick to visit his mother but the memories were just too painful.

### **Battle Honours**

Some of the toughest action for Dick came at Coriano where the regiment won battle honours. At this stage the regiment desperately needed reinforcements. This was at the height of the "conscription crisis" at home. Dick was Acting Company Sergeant Major.

"Coriano ridge was on a spur of a mountain about twice the size of our mountain here (Milton). It was holding up the advance of the whole army at this time.

"We had just taken what was known as Hill 120 to the right of it and orders came down that we should come back out a mile or so and the artillery went in.

"The artillery started blasting Coriano at 12 o'clock at night. They blasted continuously until daylight. We went in across the low land and up the hills. I always thought that two of the people I thought so much of should have had heroism medals.

"We had gone across a minefield and we didn't know it. What they sowed across the open country was a "schu" mine. It was a little contraption – when you stepped on it there was just enough in it to blow your foot off.

"The last two men – both medical orderlies – stepped off and both were injured. I had to get medical help for them.

"I sent my runner, young Sterling, back. I told him, 'You go back and get help for these men. And don't come back in. If anybody tries to send you back tell him I told you you were not to go in.'

"They sent up a bren carrier. We could see it coming.





*Full honours for a  
commissioned mascot.*

But unfortunately the Germans had that road mined and the bren carrier was blown up. I lost two very good buddies right there.

#### **House-to-house Battle**

"We went on up the hill after

that. Mortar fire all the time and shell fire. It was tough. We got on the outskirts of town about one in the afternoon. The orders from Captain Armstrong were for me to take my men and clear the one side of the town. There were Germans in many houses; others were booby-trapped. And there were snipers.

"Say it was the town of Milton and I was to start at 25 Highway and go right down to Bronte Street. Dig into every house and get everybody out of it. We fared well but we lost people there. The sniper fire caught quite a lot of men.

"The Germans were holed up in cellars. They would let you walk in and then pow! – that was it. Or they might stay there hidden and come out the following night.

"We lost a kid named Park. He was just in front of me – he shoved his head around a doorway and he went down. Then we lost Stubby Johnson and the others.

"By the afternoon of the second day we had cleared the town and the Cape Breton Highlanders came through to carry on the advance.

#### **Heroic Rescue**

"One of the bravest acts I saw in the war happened here. A company sergeant major and an officer had been caught in the open going up the hill. Stubby Johnson and the officer were wounded. There was no way of getting to them but they got on the blower to get one of the tanks up.

"The tank has an escape hatch underneath. Both injured men were lying on the ground and the tank went right over the top of them, opened the escape hatch and lifted them in – all the while the tank men could have been easy targets for mortar and other enemy fire. The officer died but Stubby Johnson lived.

"We went on further in Coriano and got about two thirds of the way downtown and there was a big Tiger tank sitting at the corner of 'Martin and Main.'

"Somebody said 'Let's shoot' and I said 'No way. He's got bigger armament than we've got.' However he turned tail after a while and was captured. We then cleared all our part of the town.

"When things quieted down I said to myself, 'I'm going back to look at some of these bombed-out houses' – a little bit of loot in my mind.

#### **No Cigar**

"I went into one house and found a bunch of old stamp books and was looking through them. I was also smoking my last cigar. I was on the second floor when I heard one shell coming. The shell hit the roof and I ended up in the basement. The only thing that made me mad was that I lost my cigar.

"After Coriano we were taken back to the Adriatic coast to Cattolica. We spent nearly two weeks there in the sun-

shine – it was a break after the action. We had a memorial service, similar to those held in Milton each November.

"My buddy Dick Himphen – we joined up together – was killed there. Our platoon strength was down to perhaps 15 instead of 30. Of the 700 men we started out with we had lost about 300 killed and wounded."

One of the wounded was Dick's friend Gordon Blair who today is a judge in Toronto. He was beside Dick when he was shot in the stomach.

"We lost quite a lot of men to shellfire.

"An average day in a soldier's life – an infantryman especially – was to advance as far as you possibly could. Then you dug in.

#### **Soldier's Best Friend**

"When anyone ever tells you that a gun was a soldier's best friend, tell him 'No, it wasn't. The shovel was.'

"As soon as you stopped for the night you got that shovel out and went down as fast as you could.

"When we first dug slit trenches we'd put a man in each trench. You might be there two or three days – you could get out only at night. The guys kind of went hairy.

"After a while the word came around – dig a slit trench big enough for two. This would be about six feet long, four feet deep and two feet wide, at least.

"I always remember a slit trench that Lenny Hinds and I dug together.

"About supper time we decided to spend a more comfortable night in a nearby deserted building.

"Two other fellows got in our trench. They were both killed by a direct hit. I can remember their names yet –

Carroll and Kellestine. It was very unusual for a shell to land right on a slit trench."

The Irish Regiment advanced in late 1944 to the Senio River. It was cold and dirty and wet.

"We're behind a dyke bank on the river on the 19th of December. The word came up that we were to take an objective about half a mile ahead, an old farmhouse. I was again Acting Company Sergeant Major. I had 88 men that night.

"We went across that high dyke bank at eight o'clock. Somehow or other he (German) must have spotted us

*The bugler sounds the alarm  
and men dash to action  
stations at guns on walls.*





*Dick Clement and Ed Towgood pose in Rome in January 1944 with "the most beautiful girl in town."*

because he started to throw up flares when we were just about half way. Then the flares brought artillery fire. We were pretty well pinned down. Then he brought tanks around from both sides of the farm house. I can remember lying there in that ditch – every fifth shell was a tracer, and they were just going like fireflies. It wasn't any fun. I thought to myself 'There's no Christmas this year. This is it!'

#### **Pinned Down**

"It got to be hand-to-hand fighting out there. This was where Bert Snow – Jim's brother – got badly wounded. We lost quite a lot of men.

"By one o'clock in the morning we couldn't go any farther. We got back the best way we could. I don't think we covered more than a quarter of a mile in all this time. I had 44 men left.

"I got on the blower to the Old Man, the Colonel. He said 'Go farther down to your right and try it again.'

"I felt like saying 'Colonel, you've just lost a soldier.' Then we lost the first man that went out. And that was it. We didn't bother any more.

"That was one of the worst nights. It was total confusion. It was a massacre.

"We moved on from there the next morning at daylight and took up another position in a house overlooking the river. And he started knocking that down bit by bit and piece by piece. The boys were all pretty disgusted."

#### **Look What I Found**

But a bit of comic relief was at hand. There was nothing to eat; Dick told the men to put on some tea while he went into the woodshed to look for food.

"When I was rooting around I found a bottle. It was cognac. Within an hour I had the best bunch of fighting guys you ever did see.

"They relieved us that day at Senio River and we were given leave. We had Christmas in Rome. We stayed with friends of Jimmy Stewart, the Regimental Quartermaster. They had a beautiful home – they were wealthy people at one time. They entertained us, took us to shows, showed us the ancient ruins and old buildings.

"They took us to Vatican City where the Pope was giving a public audience that day. We went all through the magnificent buildings of St. Peter's and saw the treasures that had been brought out after Rome was liberated. It was just mind-boggling.

"We would, of course, have to scrounge a little bit (to help out their hosts). Our cigarettes were always welcome and we bought food or wine or whatever was necessary for this household at that time."

Not all his memories of Rome are pleasant. Dick is critical of the Americans for leading a victory parade into Rome and making everyone assume that they had captured the city. In fact, Dick says, the combined Allied Forces had surrounded Rome. The Germans had retreated and there had been no fighting in the city.

The American "liberation," led by General Mark Clark, was a joke to Dick and other Canadian soldiers.

#### **Goodbye to Italy**

The end of the fighting in Italy came without warning for The Irish Regiment of Canada and other Allied forces there. They massed near the port of Leghorn for the next campaign.

Small ships – the well-known Landing Craft Infantry – took them to Marseilles in about 48 hours.

"In Marseilles we re-grouped and picked up transport. We went right through France (90-200 miles/day) only stopping in the evening and for our meals. We went into Belgium and that was where we were more or less put together again as a regiment, ready to go into action in Holland. This is about the end of February, 1945.

"The action in Holland was more or less a clean-up situation for the troops coming up from Italy. The main attack in Holland had come in the preceding summer.

"We went to an area between Arnhem and Nijmegen. The city of Arnhem had been completely evacuated by the Germans – every person had been taken out. It was just like a ghost city – you could wander around and you wouldn't see a soul. No one seems to know why Arnhem was evacuated.

"We went from there and relieved the 101st Airborne, American troops, at a little village called Zetten. After minor patrols and skirmishes the 5th Canadian Armoured Division went straight across the top end of Holland to the Zuider Zee, to a little town called Lemmer. We just divided the country in half.

"From there we went north to Groenigen in Friesland, an agricultural and historic part of Holland, home of seafarers and cheese makers.

#### **If It Moves, Shoot**

"We had one very heavy night of fighting. At the small town of Otterloo he (Germans) decided to hold on as long as possible. We were travelling at a good speed; the artillery and everything was mixed up. He decided to throw in an attack at night just after we had stopped.

"He attacked on the main roads. Everything was so disorganized. I can still recall them saying to the artillery, 'Fire, open sights. Fire, open sights.' This lasted pretty well all night.

"They continually poured in and it was just a complete puzzle almost. The best idea everyone found after a while was just to sit down or lie down and if anything moved, shoot. It was such a mix-up.

"This was the area where one of our boys got one of the highest decorations in the regiment. Corporal Red Asseltine received the DCM (Distinguished Conduct Medal).

"With the Germans pressing hard, Red Asseltine went into action. His weapon was a Bren carrier equipped with flame throwers. He sprayed the ditches that were providing cover for the enemy. Next day 200 bodies were found; 22 others surrendered.

"Red Asseltine came from Toronto and was one of the original people with the regiment. He was in B Company, the same company as myself. The next time I met him – after the war – to my amazement, he was living in Georgetown. His wife was working as the dispatcher for the fire department there.

"After Otterloo it was a matter of continuing on – liberating small towns. There was some resistance but no heavy fighting until we came to the town of Ermelo. For some reason he decided to defend this town, which was about the size of Milton.

#### **More House Clearing**

"We had to house-clear there for the better part of two days, the same as we did in Coriano. We went from house to house, getting him (Germans) out of there and liberating the civilian population.





*Dick on a tank at Camp Borden in 1940.*

"We would start at one end of the street. We couldn't commit any more than two men at a time. These men would take as much cover as possible in the shelter of the houses until they got to a doorway. The first thing they would do then is throw in a hand grenade, regardless of whether it was civilians or Germans who were in there. After the hand grenade went off, one would go in and the other would cover. Then more people would come up to cover them and they would work their way through that house until they were satisfied it was clear.

"If there were any dead or wounded they would be looked after. That would happen all the way down from one house to the other. When you met resistance you called up tanks possibly, or heavy machine gun fire, that could demolish the house if necessary.

"Our regiment got to be recognized as one of the best in the Canadian army in this type of fighting.

"In a period of about 48 hours we had the town pretty much under control and we started to meet the civilian population. In one house I met a dentist, Dr. Gaillard, who ran his practice from the home.

#### **Thin Fare**

"When we went in there were six people sitting around the table. I looked at the pot on the table and asked, 'What are you eating?'

"He said, 'Potatoes and grass! That's all we have to eat.' So we supplied rations to them.

"We stopped for the night there. A little while later a gentleman came up to me who could speak very good English. He said he had travelled in Canada and throughout the world as an art dealer.

"He was Ben Keezer, who identified himself as a Jew. Ben and his wife, Viry, had lived in Amsterdam. When the Germans occupied Holland their lives, of course, were in great danger.

"Ben explained that Dr. Gaillard had hidden them throughout the war. The remainder of his family, however, had been rounded up and few of them survived."

Ben corresponded with Dick after the war. Times remained hard for the Keezers. In one of his letters Ben asked whether Dick could send any type of wool for making clothing. Dick, who had a relative employed in a Milton knitting mill, was able to help.

The next mail from the Keezers included two sketches by Viry. These drawings of historic buildings have been hanging in the Clements' living room for more than 40 years.

The correspondence ended after a couple of years; Dick, despite inquiries, was unable to learn what happened to the couple.

But Dick continued to hear from Dr. Gaillard – the most recent note was in the late 1980s.

#### **Mass Surrender**

"After Ermelo we started to advance again with tanks and transport. We didn't find too much opposition except a little harassment here and there. When we went into the largest city in Friesland, Groenigen, there was very little resistance. I had a two-week leave to England while we were in Groenigen.

"From there we went straight through little towns towards the port of Delfzijl, right across the North Sea from Emden in Germany.

"It was there that the regiment was to have one of its significant battle honours. After a certain amount of fighting the German garrison at Delfzijl decided to surrender en masse. All their vehicles, their horses, everything."

At 7 a.m., May 2nd, 1386 Germans, including 38 officers, surrendered to Colonel Payne. They gave themselves up to approximately 400 men of The Irish Regiment of Canada.

During the final days of action two of Dick's friends, who had been with the regiment from the beginning, were killed. While on a probing patrol Sergeant Charlie Caswell and Lieutenant John Gourlay stepped on a mine.

Another officer killed was Lieutenant Hal Keeley. Dick didn't know Keeley personally but after the war the officer's father bought the Milton Brick Company. The father visited Dick to talk about his son.

"The regiment was camped at Groenigen when the war ended. On V-E Day the people went wild. They went all night and for two days. Bottles that had been hidden for years appeared. The Dutch people were so grateful they just put on a mass party.

"Later we moved to Heerenveen, a small town. We stayed there from May until I was repatriated home early in August. The longer you were in the army and the longer you served overseas the more points you earned towards repatriation. I was on the second or third detachment that left Holland.

#### **Back to Horse Palace**

"We came home on a small boat – the *RMS Samaria* – and landed at Quebec; we took a train the rest of the way. It was mid-August when I got home; we were given a

month's leave, got a good portion of our pay and were told to report back to the 'Horse Palace' for discharge.

"After the leave my good friend Major Bill Armstrong, who was handling discharges, asked whether I had a job to go to.

"I said, 'Yes, I have a job to go to but I don't want to go to it.'"

The Major suggested that Dick stay in the Army at the Exhibition Grounds until he decided what to do.

"I stayed in six months. That was one of the best and nicest things that happened to me."

Dick then worked for about a year with his brother in the painting and decorating business before setting up a floor-covering firm and becoming solidly established in civilian life.

## Under-aged Miltonians left Hamilton for overseas in 1941



**Art Cooper, 1942**  
*in the 1st Canadian General Reinforcement Unit at Cove, England. Art is a fourth generation Cooper in this area; his great-grandfather came from Ireland.*

**A**RT COOPER JOINED THE LORNE SCOTS early in the war. It was an association that was to last, off and on, for some 40 years.

He was a month short of his 16th birthday when he signed up in May, 1940 - the Scots were still a militia unit then.

"Lorne Scots was the Peel, Dufferin and Halton regiment. They had companies in just about every town in the three counties," Art says.

Art was in "C" Company, the unit for Milton, Acton and Georgetown. "A" Company was for Long Branch and Port Credit; "B" for Oakville and Burlington; "D" for Orangeville, Shelburne and Erin. Headquarters Company was in Brampton.

"To get into the militia at that time wasn't too hard. Then when we were mobilized for active service we just raised our age a couple of years. You had to be 19 to go overseas. At that time it wasn't too hard if you went directly from the militia to the Army to get in without a birth certificate."

Quite a few other under-age Miltonians accompanied him when the unit left Hamilton for overseas June 15, 1941. Others who were under 19 were Harvey Brush, Charlie Gervais, Victor Homewood, William Noble, Dunc Patterson and Elmer Zimmerman. The "mature" soldiers were John Arnold, Lorne Black, Maxie Black, William "Pinky" Coxe, Gordon Downs, Hughie Evans, Andrew Graham, John Graham, Morley Harbottle, Eddie Jones, Leslie Kelman, Lionel Muddle, Jack Stephenson and Mervin Timbers.

Three did not come back. Lorne Black, who later

*Art's relationship with the Lorne Scots was to last off and on for some 40 years.*

served with the Royal Winnipeg Rifles, was killed near Calais; Lionel Muddle drowned when a troopship was torpedoed on the way to Italy and "Pinky" Coxe was machine-gunned by an enemy aircraft in Sicily.

### Off to War

These 21 local soldiers were among more than 300 Lorne Scots who boarded the train for the east coast. Next day they broke the trip at Quebec City with a route march to the Plains of Abraham, where the British forces defeated the French in the crucial 1759 battle. They arrived in Halifax mid-afternoon June 17 and an hour later were aboard the troopship *Andes*. Among the thousands in the Lorne Scots contingent was Captain Frederick Tilston, who would win the Victoria Cross in March 1945 in the Hochwald Forest. By then he was an officer in the Essex Scottish Regiment.

The Lorne Scots had four days to settle in before heading out on a nine-day crossing to Greenoch. On the fifth day eight British destroyers met them to complete the convoy of six troopships, 12 destroyers, two battleships and numerous merchant vessels. They were to experience no trouble from enemy submarines.

Art arrived at Camp Borden in southern England July 3rd and a few weeks afterwards moved to Cove, about 12 miles from Aldershot.

"The Lorne Scots were sent over as a defence platoon," Art says, "and that meant we were on guard duty at dozens of Corps, Division and Brigade headquarters. We also provided a lot of the transport drivers for the different headquarters. We went wherever the Army went - into Dieppe with the Second Division, into Sicily and Italy with the First and Fifth Divisions and into Normandy on D-Day."

Art describes his training as "typical" for the infantry. This included weapons training as well as instruction in various types of poisonous gases and handling of incendiary bombs. The Germans were dropping a lot of incendiaries on British targets.

Art, however, did not have to call on this type of training; he was assigned to an administrative job. He started out as an orderly room runner; soon he became a regular part of the orderly room staff. After that his training, except for occasional field exercises, dealt with Company administration and orderly room procedure. In 1942 more than 1600 Lorne Scots were brought together for an exercise at Sheffield Park near Hastings.

#### On the Record

The training, of course, didn't include keeping a diary, a definite "no-no" for service people. That was Art's own idea.

"I knew I wasn't supposed to do it. But I didn't hide under the bed or anything - various people saw me writing it."

There were no terrible repercussions. The worst that happened was that he got careless in 1943 and lost everything for the first eight months of that year.

"From 1941 until 1943 we didn't have to worry about too many reinforcements - the Canadian Army wasn't in action except for Dieppe. After the invasion of Sicily we had to start looking for more reinforcements."

In the spring of 1944 when the build-up began for D-Day Art's unit was moved north to Cawthorn, near Barnsley in Yorkshire. All the facilities in southern England were needed for forces preparing to invade France.

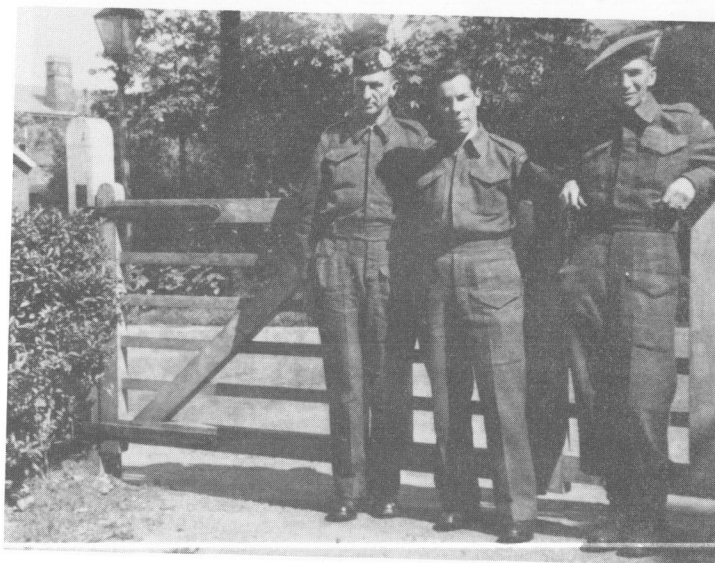
Art saw a great deal of the British Isles during his four

and a half years overseas. It started within ten days of landing in Scotland - Art and Ed Zimmerman headed for Dundee on their landing leave.

After being stationed briefly in Manchester with the Postal Corps for the 1941 Christmas rush he made that city one of his favourite haunts. He returned often to stay with a family of four Smith sisters who had provided him his original Christmas billet. He kept in touch with the sisters for some years after the war. All are now dead.

On one of his visits to Manchester he was best man for Hughie Evans who married a Manchester woman and settled there after the war.

He also spent countless weekends in London; on one visit he saw the Canadian Army show "The Kit Bags." He also served briefly at Canadian Army Headquarters in



*Three Milton soldiers (Lorne Scots), 1943, in England.*

*From the left are Morley Harbottle, Hughie Evans and Linny Naylor.*



*Mrs. Homewood, Main St., held a party for a group of Lorne Scots just before they left for overseas. From the left are: Harvey Brush, Jack Arnold, Chuck Gervais, Bud Homewood, Mrs. Homewood, Art Cooper, unidentified, Ed Zimmerman, Bill Noble, George Anderson, unidentified.*



London. While there he saw some horribly graphic photos of the Dieppe disaster. These were not seen by the public until long after the war ended.

Another favourite town was Paisley, Scotland, where a former Oakville family - the Robertsons - had settled. Bill Robertson was a pipe major with the Oakville band and later played for both the Burlington and Halton Police pipe bands. The Robertsons returned to Oakville after the war.

#### Victory Celebration

With the end of the war in early May most service people had time to relax. But for Art life became a bit more hectic. He moved several times during the month and on

May 30 his group flew to Belgium in Stirling bombers.

He has fond memories of the Third Division's victory parade June 6 in Utrecht. Art and other members of the Lorne Scots lined the street and got a front-row view of the goings-on.

In early July the unit was on the move again - 125 miles through Holland on bren gun carriers. Then it was into Germany, moving from one barracks to another for several weeks. He got used to moving, Art says, and it wasn't much of a chore since all his belongings could be stuffed into two kit bags.

In mid-August as a prelude to coming home he transferred to the Highland Light Infantry of the Guelph area, in Zeist, Holland. He remembers a huge celebration in town to celebrate the Dutch queen's birthday, August 31. Two days later the 2nd Division put on a fireworks display.

While visiting Amsterdam Art bumped into Helen "Pete" Paupst of Milton, who was serving in the Canadian Women's Army Corps. ("Pete" married Milton soldier Ray Varley overseas; they returned to make their home in this area.)

By mid-September things were winding down for Art's unit. He moved to Nijmegen where he met Wilf Wilson and Charlie Pearson, who were also on their way home.

They left Nijmegen September 17 and two days later arrived in Farnborough North camp, just in time to start nine days' leave, including visits to Manchester, Glasgow and Paisley.

#### Post-war Tragedy

When he got back to Farnborough Art learned that Neil McNabb, a Lorne Scot from Acton and an overseas chum,

had been killed in a train wreck just outside Manchester. Neil was on his last leave.

Art left Britain in late October in the *Queen Elizabeth* on a four-day crossing to Halifax. The vessel also carried many war brides and lots of babies; Art believes diaper-washing contributed to the water rationing.

There was a mix-up at the end of the trip. The Red Cross had told Art his parents would be waiting at Hamilton. But while the train was stopped at Toronto, Dick Clement, a Milton soldier, rushed aboard to tell Art his mother, father and sister were waiting a few yards away.

Art served throughout the war as a private. But he had some advantages that most privates did not enjoy. For example he received trade's pay, which gave him a nickel more than a corporal received and, Art says, without the responsibility.

He recalls that at the end of the war his pay was \$1.75 a day. A private without trade's pay earned \$1.50.

As a clerk he also enjoyed better billets than other privates. It was also nice to miss morning parades and the shaving line-ups. In the orderly room he got to know the sergeants,



*Sergeant Drummer  
Art Cooper, Lorne Scots,  
late 1960s*

the sergeant major and the officers. Since they knew him they would overlook the occasional misdemeanor.

When Art arrived home at age 21 and was discharged (Dec. 1945) after almost five years overseas he thought he was saying goodbye to the Lorne Scots. But things turned out quite differently.

After seven years in "retirement," he rejoined the militia regiment and spent 29 years as a drummer in the pipe band. In 1960 the band played at the Edinburgh Tattoo. Another highlight was the presentation of the regiment's new colours at Conn Smythe's farm in Caledon. This event was held in conjunction with the International Plowing Match. He finally retired from the Scots at age 58.

In 1954 Art started work with Ontario Steel Products in Milton - it later became Rockwell International - and remained with the firm until his retirement 32 years later.

## "If you weren't afraid you didn't have any sense"



**Jack Dawkins**

*Jack Dawkins came to Milton in 1993 to be near his daughter Anne Bouck, an employee of the town.*

**J**ACK DAWKINS MADE SOME LIFELONG FRIENDS during his years in the RCAF. Some of his relationships with Commanding Officers and others weren't so friendly. He remembers those encounters, too.

Like thousands of others Jack learned a lot about his own country while training to be an Observer. (Among the irreverent, Observers – identified by a single wing with an "O" – were known as "flying assholes"). He trained in Ancienne Lorette and Mont Joli, Quebec, and Rivers, Manitoba, before his final Canadian posting at Patricia Bay, British Columbia. There he learned low-level flying and flew patrols over the Pacific. That was 1942 when Canadians feared a Japanese invasion.

On his trip overseas in February, 1943, aboard the *Mauritania* Jack made an important discovery: he didn't get seasick.

"Winter in the North Atlantic can be a rough, rough time," Jack says.

The Air Force had about one thousand men aboard and most of them were in bed sick. Of the five thousand or so aboard ship, only about forty went down for breakfast.

Jack and others not bothered by the two-storey waves had little sympathy for the bedridden.

"After eating breakfast we would get a couple of greasy-looking eggs, put them in our mess tins – we didn't have the fancy tables the officers had – and take them to our cabin. We approached the seasick friends: 'Wouldn't you like a couple of nice eggs?' I think to this day they would like to shoot us.

"When my two gunners finally got out of bed to land at Greenoch they swore they would never go on a ship

*"It's hard to realize you could fly in flak and think it was gorgeous."*

again. One said: 'They're going to fly me home or I'm going to stay here.'"

Jack remembers clinging to the rail in the tremendous seas. "You had to hang on pretty good. The salt water would come down and hit your greatcoat. If you brought it in and just let it dry it would almost stand up by itself."

The *Mauritania* left the convoy and proceeded alone. Although there were rumours aboard ship of close-by submarines or torpedoes no shots were fired.

Jack's first overseas posting was an RCAF Coastal Command squadron at Thorney Island, a permanent station on the south coast of England. "Our billets were in beautiful old brick buildings, two to a room, nice lounge, dining room and soon."

In addition to Jack's squadron three others did torpedo work – British, Australian and New Zealand units. Jack's group flew Hampdens.

"You sort of expected yourself to be in a shooting war but in essence you weren't," he says. But some would question Jack's assessment.

"When you carried a torpedo you were generally 'vectored' – ordered to a particular area where German shipping was moving goods and personnel – Bay of Biscay, in and around Helgoland (Germany), the coast of Norway.

"In between strikes, as we called them, we did patrol work, along the coast of France, south of Cherbourg and up along the coast north into Holland and up as far as Helgoland. On those occasions we carried bombs. If it was needed we would go across the coast, bomb a specific target and head back for home."

While serving at Thorney Island Jack was commissioned – under unusual circumstances.

He had a problem with the Commanding Officer there, which Jack didn't want to elaborate on, except to say, "He wasn't very hep about me becoming an officer."

Jack advanced from Sergeant to Flight Sergeant, to Warrant Officer Second Class, W/O. First Class but it was slow going. All that changed when a permanent air force officer, Squadron Leader Weldy Cowan, joined the Squadron briefly.

"He at one time had been a pianist with Benny Goodman. He was one of the greatest guys."

Weldy knew the officer who had been reluctant to give Jack a commission.

"He's on leave," Weldy said, "and I'm going to get you your officer's."

Jack hesitated because by this time he wasn't all that fond of officers.

"No, no," Weldy insisted, "you're going to be an officer."

He sent Jack to London where Weldy had friends at the Knightsbridge permanent base. His message was to get Jack a commission before the reluctant C.O. returned from leave.

"So I became a Pilot Officer. Two months later I became a Flying Officer. It was all Weldy. If I had been there another couple of weeks I would have been a Flight Lieutenant if Weldy had anything to do with it."

But by this time Weldy was dead! He was shot down soon after leaving Thorney Island.

His legacy, Jack's commission, probably made things a little smoother, both on the job and off. In London at the Crackers Club bar, one of the favourites with Canadians, Jack met Diane Gardiner. She was the featured dancer in the musical "Panama Hattie", starring Ben Lyons and Bebe Daniels.

"We enjoyed each other's company but there was no romance. I admired her because she worked hard at her trade. The times we were able to go out were like a leave for her from a job that was night after night after night."

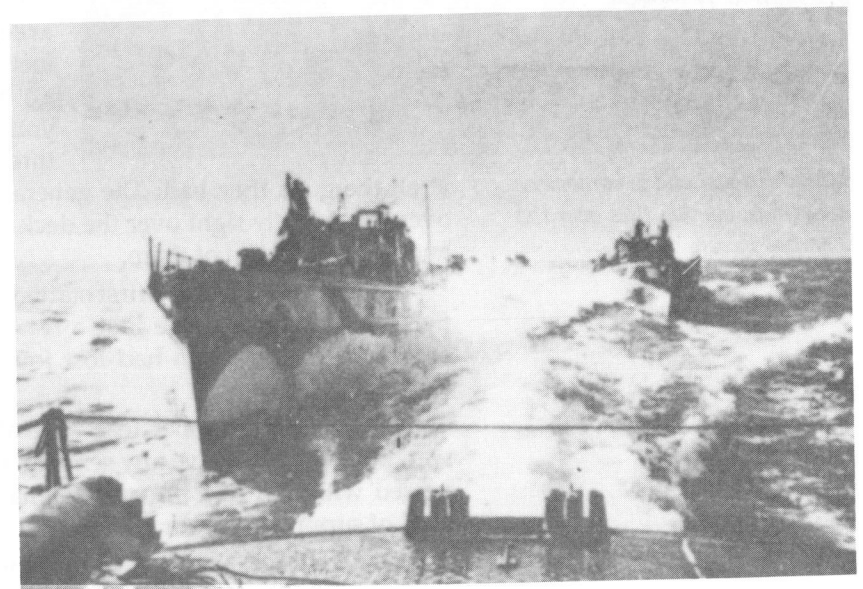
Like most other Canadians overseas during the war Jack visited many places in England and Scotland. There life returned to normal, Jack says, unless you happened to hit a town that was being buzzed or bombed.

He found the Scots wonderful people. He respected the English, with reservations.

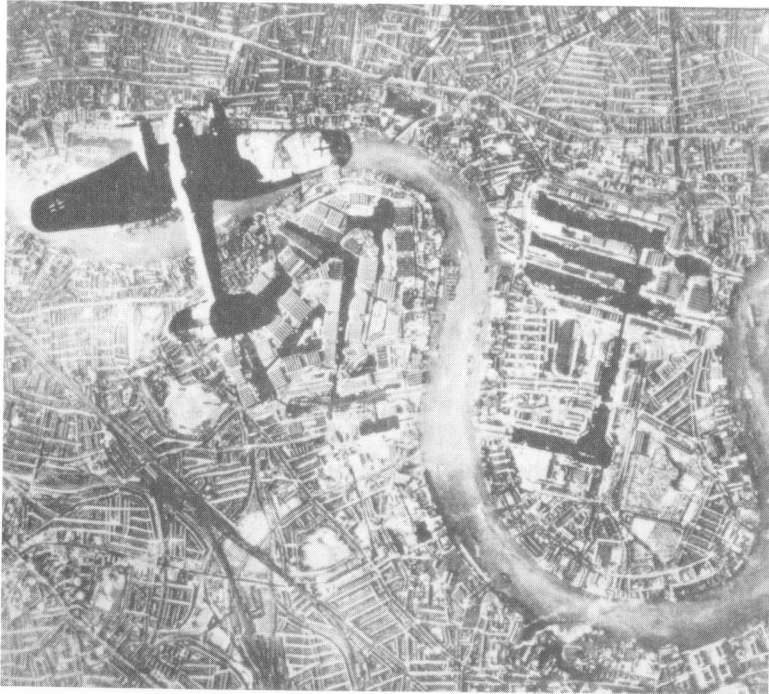
"We were known as Colonials, of course, and the New Zealanders, the Aussies and the Canadians hated that because we were equal to anyone who lived in England or Scotland.

"Torpedo work

*A flotilla of German motor-torpedo boats patrols the Atlantic coast of France in readiness for the Allied landing.*







*London's east end is bombed as a German bomber flies over the Thames River.*

was all low level – 100, 200, 250 feet when we would go out across the North Sea or down into Biscay. That was mainly to keep under radar. When you dropped your torpedo the optimum was to drop it 1,000 yards out (from the target) and 100 feet up.

"And the Germans knew exactly where you were. They could just train their guns on that area. At one thousand feet you had nowhere to go but over the ship. If you did a tight turn you threw your belly straight

at all the guns they had. The general way was to go right over the ship, fly right over the deck, as close as you could, and get the hell out of there.

"When torpedo work first started losses ran at about 75 per cent per strike. We lost a few people." (After two strikes Jack's squadron had lost four of the ten planes in action.)

"We all had an inner fear – we all were afraid. If you weren't you didn't have any sense at all. Your fear was harnessed with sort of a bravado, a characteristic where you kind of suppressed your fear.

"Where it hit me most was after we had made a strike,

or had dropped a bomb – and of course with all of this there is always a bit of flak. You're on your way home when you begin to figure out how lucky you were that you got the hell out of there."

The enemy wasn't always the problem. Jack recalls a strike in Norway, which was about the limit of the aircraft's range.

"In navigation you did what is called a dog-leg. You would fly at 90 degrees, then 90 degrees again before coming back on course. It was just like a triangle.

"When you flew the first leg you would get the gunners to throw out a flame float, or in daylight, a smoke float.

"They would aim at that and give you the angle that was on the gun ring. You got what you called a cocked hat, three readings. Generally it was about a quarter of an inch.

"This time the readings were wild – I couldn't have put them on my calculator unless it had been about four feet wide. I talked to the gunners on the inter-com.

"They said: 'Oh, now, what the hell's the matter with you? You know damn well we can do this.'

"I climbed over the bomb bay into the back section of the aircraft. Here were the two of them with a mickey of booze – both corked.

"I was livid. I plugged in (the inter-com) and gave them hell.

"Their argument was something like this. 'They paid \$38,000 to train you and you're supposed to be the smart one. They only paid \$15,000 to train us as gunners. So you get us home. What the hell is the matter with you?'

"Well, when we approached the British coast we suddenly became a target. It was pretty heavy fire.

"Our gunners, of course, had forgotten the IFF switch (Identification Friend or Foe) to warn off British guns.

"Anyway we landed in Luchers, Scotland. And we were supposed to land on the south coast of England."

Jack recalls a second navigational foul-up when he had no one to blame but himself.

"This is how stupid you can be – and how your mind goes blank after you have been through certain things. We were coming back from Biscay. I had been rattled around – I had a bruised kidney and I had to go to the can quite often. There were no facilities on the aircraft, of course.

"In the nose of the aircraft there was an escape hatch. I thought, 'Ah, shit, I'll just open that up and let 'er rip, rather than have a stinky bulb (nose of the aircraft) to sit in.' Of course when I opened the hatch everything was sucked out, including all the maps I had.

"The only thing left, because it was heavy, was the calculator. The maps were gone, my navigation bag was gone, and I was soaking wet because it just blew back up on me.

"I never said a word to the guys. The pilot said: 'What's our course? Should we have a check?'

"No, I think we're OK. Just turn five degrees to port and head straight out."

"As it happened we hit Land's End, which is the southern tip of England. It was a kind of foggy day when we got back. If we had missed that we would have been flying yet.

"They never allowed me to forget. I became the 'Land's End Kid' from then on."

Jack's unit – five aircraft – sank a ship on one of their flights.

"I don't know whether it was our torpedo or not. My

eyes were closed all the time. We sank a ship but I sure as hell didn't stay around to see what happened. We left that to Intelligence."

When the torpedo work ended – Jack thinks the Navy took over the job of handling German shipping – Jack and the pilot were transferred to the only Canadian squadron that flew bi-planes. These were *Albacores* stationed at Manston in the Margate/Ramsgate area north of Dover.

The Canadians griped at the switch. They would have preferred almost anything to a bi-plane that was built in 1931.

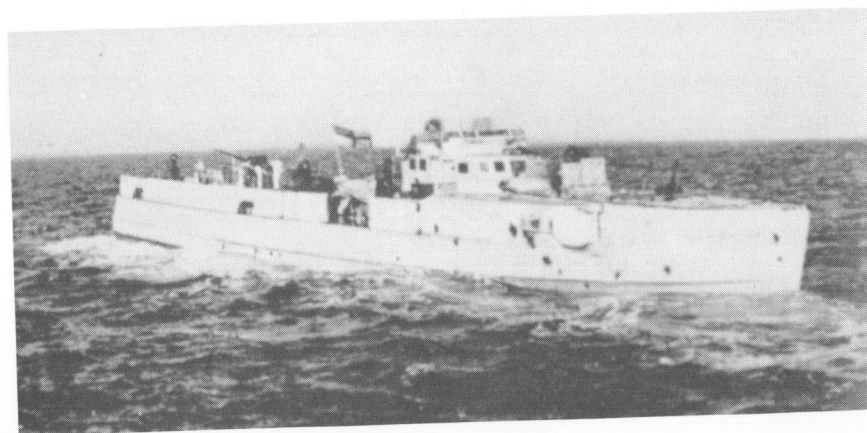
The job was to sink German E-Boats which were present along the south coast from Calais right down through Le Havre.

"We didn't know it then but the invasion was coming up later that year. With their speed and armament the E-Boats could have made things difficult for a flotilla sailing across the channel.

"We were pretty successful," Jack says. But in that year the squadron lost eight of the original twelve crews.

"I don't mean to be negative about it but that wasn't bad for the type of work we

*A German E-Boat captured in the English Channel. The holes in the hull are caused by British fire.*



did. We worked close to the coast and faced heavy gun fire.

"We were dive bombing. We carried eight 500-pound bombs and all had a counter-mine nose. When the bombs were dropped they went in a trajectory like one side of an umbrella. When the first one hit the others would explode after it. Chunks anywhere from the size of your fist to eight inches would just absolutely fill that particular area. It was not only anti-boat, it was anti-personnel.

"You had to get ahead of them (E-Boats) enough so that your trajectory hit just about the right time and let them sail right into it. We certainly got enough of them, or made them afraid enough, that on D-Day there wasn't one E-Boat moving.

"We had two sure and two probables for our own

crew. When you think they were a couple of million dollars apiece, it wasn't bad for an old aircraft that cost them two or three hundred thousand dollars. It had a two-man crew.

"I was the observer and wireless man and that's about all. Everything was done by the pilot, because he controlled the angle of the aircraft. I was really a passenger."

During this time Jack had another job that seemed senseless –laying down smoke screens. This was off the southeast coast of England, from the Thames down.

"The job was to spot tugs that were pulling structures that looked like huge bath tubs, and to hide them with a smoke screen. The smoke was laid from Cap Tournai westward to within 300 feet of the tug.

"When we were told we were on smoke duty we hated it. 'Here we go again, nothing but a damn taxi.' We never realized the importance of it."

In fact the smoke was hiding cement structures that would soon serve as docks in the invasion of France.

When the invasion came Jack saw some of the ships that were taking part without realizing what was happening.

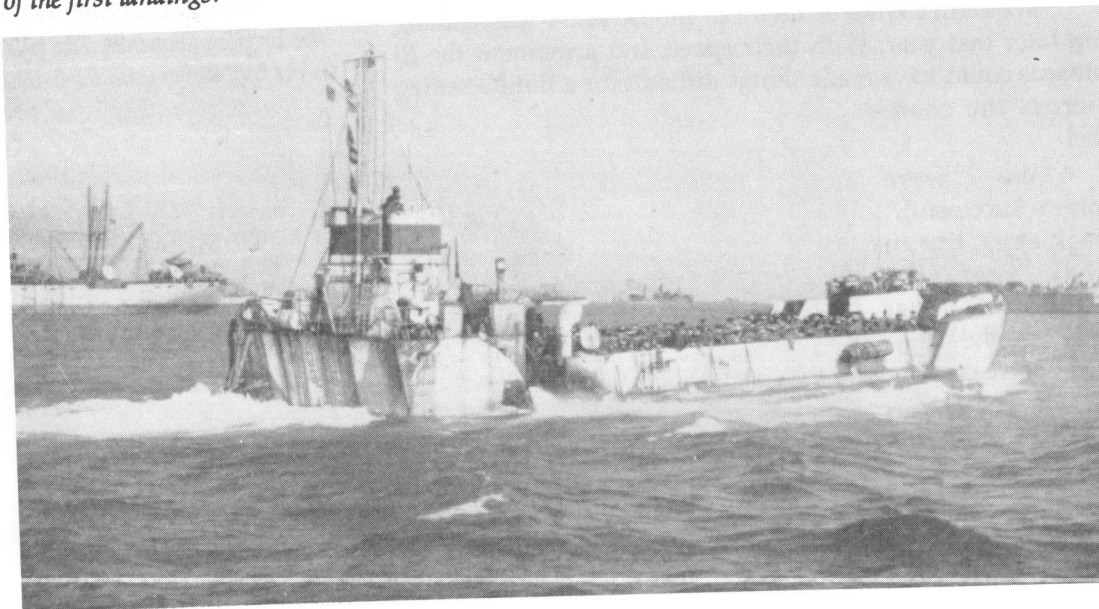
That particular night a reporter from the London Times came with Jack on a patrol from approximately Dunkerque to Cherbourg.

"I saw what I thought was the shadow of an aircraft fly over us. I called the coast people in England: 'Is there a bandit in the area?' 'No bandit. Everything is all clear.'

"We never saw a thing. We flew over Cherbourg – there wasn't a gun fired. We flew along the coast, it was quiet. There wasn't an E-Boat out, there wasn't a fishing boat, there wasn't anything.

"But when we were coming home in the distance we

*Allied landing craft are shown off the enemy coast during one of the first landings.*



saw all these waves. But we had seen them many times before. They would send out so many ships four or five miles and then haul them back in. It wasn't unusual."

Jack arrived home about 5 a.m. and went to bed right after interrogation.

A few hours later an orderly wakened Jack.

"We're in France!"

"Oh, bullshit!"

Jack couldn't believe it after the calm a few hours before. "It was like driving a taxi on a lonely night without a person on the road."

Three months after D-Day Jack's squadron went into action against German ships trying to escape from Boulogne before Canadians and other troops captured the port. Jack estimates there were between 30 and 40 German troop-carrying ships.

"We were working with motor torpedo boats. We would draw the fire and the MTB's would come in and throw the torpedoes. It was our job to fly out, bomb, rack 'em up again, fly out. We made four trips this night."

The squadron of about 15 planes was at a mock-up station – wire mesh runways, tent accommodation – close to the English coast. That action left Jack with an incredible memory.

"It was the most beautiful sight I have ever seen in my life. It's hard to realize you could fly in flak and think it was gorgeous.

"Tracers were yellow, and they were green, and they were red and they were blue and they were all colours. This German convoy stretched five miles at least. What they did to protect themselves was 'hose pipe' – just like

spraying your lawn. It was just five miles of gorgeous colour going up in the air.

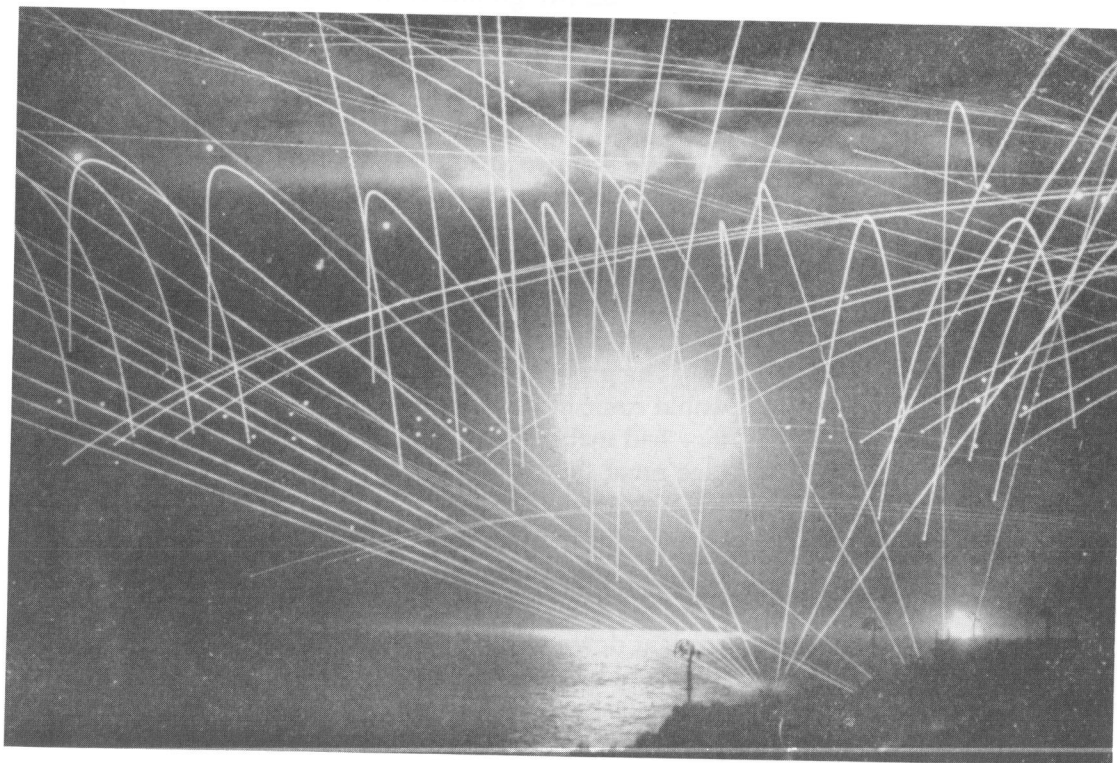
"You didn't realize until you felt some of the bullets hit your aircraft that these guys meant business.

"We lost two of our 12 aircraft that night, that's all."

From here the squadron moved to Bruges, Belgium, operating again from a wire-mesh runway.

The Canadians were advancing towards the Germans,

*Coastal guns provided a colourful if hazardous display.*





who were holed up in the area.

"You would see hundreds of Germans – absolute fear in their eyes – being taken back by the troops. Our guys were pretty fed up and they didn't give a damn about anyone's feelings.

"Our job was to bomb German ships and clusters of German troops on land. When we landed our worst fear was snipers.

"We had two ground crew killed on the runway. They finally found the snipers in a church steeple in the little village of Knocke. Canadians blew them out. They were about 16, just two kids. They were good.

"When you went to your aircraft it was open field running. We had two ground crew killed by infiltrators – one was knifed and his uniform taken."

For the vast majority, however, there were compensations.

"We had a hotel, which was terrific – food great, everything – feather beds and all of that.

"The ground crew were billeted with civilians. They would come home and boast to us about all the girlfriends they had met – Belgian girls – living with them. I have no idea what they did. However, there were times I guess, when we envied them.

"For us the war was pretty well winding up. We left Belgium in December '44 to be sent back to Canada.

"We came back on the *Queen Elizabeth*. We went straight down to the Azores and across the equator. Spent Christmas Day on the ocean, marvelous food. And, of course, being an officer by this time, I got better billeting and a few things like that. The seas were right.

"When we got to New York it was cold, and the waves were a little higher."

Jack has vivid memories of the arrival.

"It's a strange feeling to go into New York and see the Statue of Liberty. I thought the boat was going to tip because everyone was on the one side taking a look at it.

"Everyone was quarantined to the ship for the three days in New York, or were supposed to be. Passengers included 152 war brides – all with accommodations on the senior officers' deck. Fourteen of the brides were sent back to Britain.

"I guess there was a little hanky panky and the girls paid the penalty, not the officers," Jack says.

"We bought our way off the ship and spent a day in New York. Twenty-four hours and never slept. We hired a taxi driver – drove home and told his wife we were taking him for 24 hours. We had all our ribbons up to be heroes. We could hardly spend any money anywhere we went. We saw everything. We saw, I guess, all the bars."

Back in Canada Jack was assigned to Malton as an instructor. It didn't work out.

"I got into trouble with my methods of teaching. I was trying to teach that you had to improvise at times – that war was a little different from straight navigation."

The students were used to the classroom. They weren't delighted by Jack's in-air instruction.

"I pulled the blinds and said 'Get us home!' They had to learn what to do if their maps were shot out. You can't phone home and have another one sent by Purolator express.

"Well, some of the kids complained that I had taken

maps away from them in the air. They weren't going to get lost – the pilot knew where he was.

"I had a few arguments with the ground instructor, who had never been in the war."

They agreed to disagree and Jack was discharged in April of 1945.

He was out of uniform and engaged to be married when the war ended a few weeks later. His fiancée worked in the customer relations department of Bell Telephone in Toronto. It so happened that her boss was the father of a nurse Jack had taken out in Belgium.

Jack started celebrating early V-E Day with several friends. By noon he had "cranked in a fair amount of booze in celebration." He decided he wanted to spend the rest of the day with Dotty.

"I went down and walked into Mr. McCullough's office.

"'I've got a bride-to-be working for you,' I said, 'and I'm celebrating. I'd like her to have the afternoon off.'

"He called my fiancée into his office. She nearly fell over. She could tell that I had been into the crock a little bit. She was embarrassed and perhaps even afraid of losing her job.

"But she needn't have been. The boss just said 'You have the afternoon off to go with Jack.' We celebrated well into the next morning."

That was the last drink Jack had for a year as he set his course in civilian life.

"I didn't have a drinking problem but I had drunk pretty well. I went back to school – took a year at the University of Toronto in Commerce and Finance. But I



*The Fairey Albacore*

found at the age I was (32) and the length of time I had been out of school I didn't have any study abilities any more.

"But the year did me a lot of good. It got me back so that I had a vocabulary. In the Air Force, as I always said, your vocabulary drops to about one hundred words 'Yes, No' and 'Sir'. And the rest are curse words. It helped me in that respect. Then I got into the selling field and I just went from there."

## *Finding the need was a problem but a sympathetic doctor was the answer*



**Ken Hassard**

*A native of Acton, Ken came here about 40 years ago to work with Canadian Meter Company.*

**P**ERSISTENCE AND A SYMPATHETIC doctor launched Ken Hassard's naval career.

Ken completed grade 12 at Acton Continuation School in 1942 and worked briefly in a chemical lab in Oshawa (Duplate Canada) before trying to enlist in the Air Force. He failed the medical: Ken is red-green colour blind.

Next he tried the Navy. This was at HMCS York, in normal times the Automotive Building at CNE.

"Again I ran into the same problem with my colour vision. They have these books with numbers hidden in a series of coloured circles. I couldn't get past about page 2, which was black and white.

"But I persisted and it turned out they were recruiting at that time for radio artificers – technicians to maintain radar equipment on board ship. Colour vision, in the opinion of the medical officer, would not be mandatory since I would not be performing seaman's tasks. After several visits the doctor tore up my original medical and started all over again."

This time in the colour-vision segment the doctor wrote "normal". But he cautioned Ken that if he failed the radio artificers course he would have to take another medical. And they would have some fancy explaining to do.

After eight weeks of basic training Ken began a comprehensive program in the then hush-hush radar course. First a short session to brush up on mathematics. Then four months in radio theory at the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton. Finally he arrived at the Canadian Navy signals school in St. Hyacinthe, Quebec. This was the advance level, working on all types of radar and wireless equip-

*Ken felt a deep satisfaction when his ship accepted surrender of 18 submarines.*

ment. Ken did well, bidding goodbye to the colour vision predicament.

Nevertheless, Ken has always associated graduation with "a very sad experience."

### **Trouble by the Quart**

"We decided to have a class party at a downtown hotel in St. Hyacinthe. I guess I had a very sheltered childhood – we never had beer in the house, my parents being God-fearing Presbyterians.

"I got introduced to beer – in quart bottles. I guess I became fair game for a lot of chug-a-lugging. By the time I lost count I think I had consumed nine quarts of beer. That left me in a very bad condition.

"Then about two or three weeks later I was out to sea for the first time. I was seasick and every time I looked over



*Watson-Watt, the inventor of radar,  
tours the training centre at St. Hyacinthe*

the side to do the necessary thing when you're seasick, I saw the froth of the wake and it looked like the foam on beer. I could taste the beer all over again.

"It was such a traumatic experience – the two of those combined – that I can't drink beer to this day."

Ken says LORAN – Long Range Navigation – was just being introduced. Today such equipment is everywhere, even on pleasure craft, and satellites are being used for transmitting the signals.

During the war the Navy operated several pairs of transmitters on the Atlantic route. By tuning in their signals navigating officers could pinpoint their positions.

"There were only two of us on board ship that were allowed to touch the LORAN set – the navigation officer and myself. I had the responsibility of keeping it harmonized, tuned up. It was quite complicated to tune in the different frequencies and harmonize the signals from the various stations."

#### U. K. Bound

When the sailors ended training Ken headed for the manning pool in Scotland near Glasgow. The Canadian naval base, *HMCS Niobe*, was at nearby Gourock.

"I went over on a troop ship, the *Aquitania*, a big old four-stacker. It was the biggest movement of Navy personnel, I think, ever. There were enough for three destroyer crews, probably eight or nine hundred in our group. Also thousands of Army and Air Force – more than 15,000 in total."

Since the Navy was the senior service Ken's group was the last to go aboard. A convoy of trucks picked them up at *HMCS Stadacona* (Halifax) just after dark. About midnight

they slipped anchor. Ken later discovered that some of the airmen had been on the ship over a week waiting for departure.

Ken was quickly posted to base maintenance at Londonderry, Northern Ireland, the other end of the convoy route. His job was trouble-shooting – solving radar problems. Since the Canadian Navy didn't have a base in Northern Ireland Ken found a home in the Royal Navy barracks (*HMS Ferret*).

"This was probably the low point of my naval career as far as accommodation is concerned. The Royal Navy is a lot tougher than the Canadian Navy for amenities.

#### Pretty Primitive

"In the Canadian Navy on board ship you could buy two packages of cigarettes a day. At *HMS Ferret* once a month they issued a ration – tobacco leaves. It was strange to see people – especially WRENS – rushing off to barracks with an armful of tobacco leaves. It was pretty primitive. I couldn't believe my eyes."

Ken was also struck by the slow progress in the British naval ranks. He noticed

*Morning division ceremony  
at St. Hyacinthe, Quebec*





a sentry with about 20 years of service and still an Ordinary Seaman. Ken found this discouraging; he wondered who would ever want a career in the Royal Navy.

Ken was one of four Canadian naval people at *HMS Ferret* and the only radio artificer.

He spent most of his time at a repair depot in the dockyard. He usually worked on Canadian ships – frigates, destroyers and corvettes.

Most of the time he was trouble-shooting. But things were advancing quickly, which meant many modifications and quite often sea trials to test new equipment.

#### Subs Surface

Ken was in Northern Ireland when V-E Day arrived. His strongest memory is of the surrender of German submarines.

"The subs rendezvoused in certain locations. Four or five Canadian frigates would go out to meet them. We brought in, I think, sixteen in one lot.

"We were tying them up at the mouth of the Foyle. I counted 64 submarines tied up there."

Some of the subs were covered in black rubber and appeared a little fatter than normal. The rubber was meant to absorb the sound waves of our ships' ASDIC (anti-submarine) equipment and thus avoid detection.

When the European war ended Ken volunteered for service in the Pacific. As a result

he was put on the first frigate returning to Halifax. In Canada he was posted to *HMCS Sioux*, a destroyer.

"The *Sioux* had had quite an illustrious career. It went to Murmansk a couple of times. It was involved in D-Day, the shelling. It also took Freedom Fighters into Norway. It was operated out of Scapa Flow, posted to the Royal Navy. That's why you didn't hear as much about the *Sioux* as some of the others, the *Haida* for example. There were a lot of reports back on it.

"It was nice to get on your own ship for a change. It was interesting: it had four radar sets, for which I was responsible. There was LORAN and other electronics, including IFF (Identification Friend or Foe), a black box."

The IFF unit sent out a radar signal that triggered a coded response from a "friendly" vessel or plane.

#### Direction Change

By August the *Sioux* was about ready to follow its sister ship, the *Algonquin*, which already was in the Mediterranean headed for the Pacific.

Suddenly the war against Japan ended: for Ken and the *Sioux* this meant literally a change in direction. Instead of heading east they sailed for Esquimalt by way of the Panama Canal. They arrived at Vancouver Island the day before Christmas after several stops along the way. The voyage took well over three months.

He didn't realize it then but Ken's sailing days were over. The *Sioux* was moth-balled soon after arrival. (It was called back into service during the Korean fighting in the early 1950s.)

"I didn't get out until March, 1946. I took a week to come back home by train. We left Victoria about noon on a

*HMCS Sioux*



Saturday by ferry to Vancouver where we picked up the train. We didn't get into Toronto until the following Friday morning – a week out of your life. But it was interesting."

Ken joined as an Ordinary Seaman. At discharge, three promotions later, he was a confirmed petty officer (Radio Artificer, 3rd class).

#### Post-war

For the next ten years Ken made use of his naval training. He set up Hassard Radio to sell and service TV and radio sets in Acton. When that faltered after three years he joined A.V. Roe as a radar flight service mechanic. Then he joined Canadian Westinghouse, again in electronics.

"I worked on the guided missile that the Canadian government was developing, the 'Velvet Glove.' I went up to the Air Force base at Cold Lake (Alberta) in 1953; we were doing some testing, not unlike the Cruise missile they'd been testing today up there. Back in those days the cold war was on, the Iron Curtain had dropped and a lot of these things were kept under wraps. We haven't heard too much about some of it."

Ken decided to leave the defence industry in 1955 when he joined Canadian Meter Company in Milton, the start of a 35-year career.

*Ken Hassard, left, with friend in  
Victoria at the end of the war*



## Barb and Lorne Havard made the most of a wartime casualty



**Barb and Lorne Havard** following their wedding in England, July 1945. Barb and Lorne moved here 25 years ago; they found a fine home that happened to be handy to Lorne's head office in Etobicoke and the chemical plant in Cambridge.

**B**ARBARA KAINS AND LORNE HAVARD served overseas with the Canadian Army. They met while on duty, so to speak, and were married July 1945 at Finchampstead in southern England. Barb recalls a "very beautiful little town and a charming ancient church."

"On the wall they had a list of rectors from its origins in the 1100s. It is Anglican although it was built as a Catholic church, I guess. The names were mostly French for centuries."

The wedding ceremony – Barb in civilian dress, Lorne in uniform – went off beautifully. But the post-wedding plans broke down a bit.

"I guess we were trying to save money but we got the x-ray technician to take the pictures," Lorne says. "He stayed at the mess and got so loaded on the punch that all the pictures of our wedding were fuzzy."

Fortunately some of the guests took photos. Lorne had one of these small snapshots enlarged and framed for their 40th wedding anniversary.

The second hitch came at the start of their honeymoon.

### No Civilians, Please

"I was dedicated to getting into civilian clothes whenever I could," Barb says. "I don't know why. I think it was very foolish of me but I had my sisters accumulate a trousseau and they sent that over from Canada."

"And they sent all the ingredients for the wedding cake, which of course was a great success in England. The hospital dietitian had this great huge cake made and every crumb was consumed in short order."

They headed off on their honeymoon to Scotland. But when they went to board the sleeping car Barb was turned

*Barb wondered why Lorne wasn't a better skater. Otherwise she thought he was o.k.*

back because she was in civilian clothes.

"A very sore point," says Barb. "We had to sit up in this jam-packed compartment with a bunch of Glasgow fellows singing all night. However, we had a lovely honeymoon in the Trossachs district, so it wasn't all bad."

Barb had enlisted shortly after completing her training as an occupational therapist. She was the sixth therapist to join the Canadian Army. Her rank, 2nd Lieutenant, was the result of persistent lobbying by the therapists' organization.

"I was working in Montreal just before enlisting. This was all waiting for the point when occupational therapists would be admitted to the Army on the same level as nursing sisters (2nd Lieutenants). There had been quite an argument about that. Physiotherapists and occupational therapists were not going to be admitted as officers but they hung on and eventually they were given that rank."

Barb was sent to Toronto where she joined a General Hospital Unit preparing for overseas. Then came a hectic weekend leave to get her things together in Montreal before she was on a train heading for Halifax. That was about the beginning of May, 1944.

### Tight Quarters

"We were on the *Empress of Scotland*. Ten thousand people on a ship designed to hold eight or nine hundred. There were six hospitals (staffs) on the ship as well as air crew – pilots, navigators and gunners – to get them over before D-Day.

"We were just jammed in three-tiered bunks all over the ship. The hold was full of air crew – five-tiered bunks. It was just incredible. If the Germans had sunk that ship they would have done a lot of damage.

"But it was a fast ship and we went unescorted straight across, not much zig-zagging or anything."

Within a week Barb was put in charge of setting up a new department at No. 17 Canadian General Hospital at Pinewood, a rural setting near Wokingham, southwest of London.

"I was in a French-Canadian unit. I felt that I was very well treated and that was really no problem. I didn't speak French well then and I certainly don't now, and they didn't all speak English, either. But there was no friction.

"There must have been 35 or 40 doctors perhaps. I'm not sure how many nurses. It was quite a large hospital – all Nissan huts. One thing we were a little smug about was our comfortable mess. We had central heating. To have central heating in England at that time – we were very pampered, I must say.

"We had a central dining room and our food probably was pretty good for the time. Pretty boring but pretty good."

#### **Battlefield Friends**

When D-Day came she and other occupational therapists were temporarily shifted to other jobs because their hospital became a casualty clearing station for troops injured during the invasion.

"They flew the wounded back. So for several days we were receiving wounded just in their uniforms, straight off the battlefield. As things got organized after a month or so it reverted to more of a general hospital."

But for six months Barb was not permitted to travel outside the immediate area.

The work of occupational therapists varied with the

nature of the hospital. At a large re-hab centre in Essex, for example, the work was very physical, designed to return the troops to full duty. In Barb's hospital the emphasis was on recreational activities.

"It was a matter of giving them something to put in their time and make it less tedious. They loved needlepoint. This was something they could make and send back to a wife or mother. We churned out hundreds of those. Nobody thought that it was a sissy occupation."

*Queen Elizabeth visits patients  
in the hospital where Barb was  
working.*







*Barbara Havard in dress uniform, wool, worn by nursing sisters and therapists.*

Many of the details of the work have faded from Barb's memory. But she has never forgotten how she felt about her patients.

"I remember being so impressed with the morale of the troops coming back, the wounded. They were all so cheerful and optimistic. I thought they were wonderful. I have certainly kept that with me all my life. They were a great bunch.

"I was doing what I wanted to do and I enjoyed it immensely. I thought that the country was beautiful. I loved being in England even though it was war time. And of course while I was there it was the time when the V-1s and V-2s were coming in so it wasn't that comfortable to be close. You knew that London was under attack and we

weren't very far from London. The odd one (rocket) came close to us."

Rockets, however, didn't keep her from visiting London. Once her travel restrictions were lifted she went there often.

#### War-time Romance

At the hospital there was an active social life between the officers' mess and the nursing sisters' mess, which included occupational therapists.

Barb and Lorne met at an occupational therapy workshop in March, 1945. Lorne had been wounded in north-west Europe.

"I don't know how many days later I invited him to go

with a group of us on a skating party at Richmond, one of our favourite activities. We'd go on the train and rent skates at Richmond. It was quite a surprising place in wartime to have an indoor rink with music."

Barb didn't realize that Lorne had suffered a leg wound. She couldn't understand why a Manitoba boy wouldn't be a little better skater. Obviously he had other attractive qualities and, as Barb puts it, "we saw a good bit of each other after that."

Barb worked in the hospital until October when her number came up for returning to Canada.

The homecoming on the *Ile de France* was stormy and dreadful. Barb along with many hundreds of others on the crowded vessel was sick for almost the entire six days.

"We had 24 people in each room, which was basically a bedroom you would get on a cruise ship. We shared the washroom between the two rooms. Bunks piled up with everybody seasick. I don't think I had any food. We used to crawl up on the deck and sort of huddle in the corner, out of the wind."

#### Post-war Poverty

Barb's war experience was the end of her career as an occupational therapist. The Havards' first child, Michael, was born in 1946 when Lorne was back at university and the young couple was struggling to make ends meet – a period Barb remembers as "several years of quite extreme poverty."

By then Lorne had been out of university six years. In 1940 after his first year in a commerce course he had expected to be called into the Navy any day. When the call didn't come he took a temporary job as a teacher.

At the end of the school term he accepted a call from the XII Manitoba Dragoons, formerly a militia regiment. That was July 1; Lorne joined as a Lieutenant.

His enlistment continued a family tradition in the Canadian Army. Lorne's brother John joined before the Second World War and made it a lifetime career. He retired as a Captain (Ordnance). His father, Arthur, who came to southern Manitoba (Altamont) from Wales in 1900, rose to the rank of Major in the Canadian infantry in World War 1 and afterwards was active in the Manitoba Mounted Rifles, a militia unit.

Lorne went to summer camp with this cavalry regiment in 1939. It took him and his fellow soldiers two days to ride from Altamont to Camp Shilo, near Brandon. Lorne has happy memories of "galloping around the sand dunes for two weeks."

#### Golf Course Heaven

Immediately after enlisting for active service Lorne was sent to the West Coast on training courses. Next stop was Camp Borden, which was supposed to be a stepping stone to overseas. But Japan's entry into the war changed all that.

"Because we were a regiment – in name, not in training – we immediately got sent out to Vancouver Island to do reconnaissance work up and down the coast. We were based mostly at Sooke Harbour, just outside Victoria."

Living in a tent on the Esquimalt golf course, Lorne enjoyed the winter and the blooming roses. When he compared it to what he was used to in Manitoba, he thought "we were as close to heaven as we were going to get."

Lorne's overseas adventure began in May, 1942 on a bizarre note. Coming off patrol one Saturday morning a

group of 20, including Lorne, got word they were going to Camp Borden.

"We took lots and one fellow went into Victoria to get our tickets. When he got back he woke us up: 'Look, fellows, you better pack your trunks because these tickets say Halifax!'"

Since Victoria and Esquimalt Command wasn't really on a wartime footing the staff took weekends off so there was no way to find out why the group was catching a troop train on Sunday morning for Halifax.

They arrived on the east coast Friday night and immediately boarded a ship in a waiting convoy. Sunday the 30 odd vessels moved off on what turned out to be a peaceful trip.

#### This Is War?

"We were on a gorgeous ship, the RML (Royal Mail Line) *Andes*, which had been a cruise ship for the southern waters. There were two of us in a cabin, the bar was open (whiskey 25c a glass). And there were 40 Canadian nurses on their last fling – they were going across the world to serve in the South African military.

"We landed at Liverpool and took a train to Sunninghill, near Windsor, en route to Camp Borden. The people were puzzled by our arrival. 'Well, well, well – what are you people doing here? You are supposed to be in Camp Borden, Canada.'

"Everything was absolute chaos. Finally they suggested we take a month's leave while they figured things out. So we did that."

Then came some training on armoured cars until the XII Manitoba Dragoons arrived in Britain a couple of months later.

*Lorne Havard at Camp Shilo near Brandon, Manitoba, in 1939 with a cavalry regiment.*





*Barb Havard in the working uniform for an occupational and physiotherapist.*

Late in 1943 Lorne was transferred from the regiment to the training depot, again on armoured cars and reconnaissance work. These months were "very interesting and a very active part of our military career."

His next posting was to the 8th RECCE Regiment, a Saskatchewan armoured car unit. As a troop leader Lorne commanded more than 40 men who operated two light armoured cars, three heavy armoured cars and seven personnel carriers.

#### **The Real Thing**

He arrived in Europe in July, 1944, about a month after D-Day.

"It was a great relief to get to Europe because we left Whitehaven (I think) in landing craft, about 80 of us to a boat. I don't know whether you have been in a room with 80 people, all seasick at the same time. It's incredible. It took us all night to get to the French coast. At the time I felt I was going to spend the rest of my life in Europe because there was no way I was going back over the channel.

"In action, one role was to probe the front to stir up enemy action. Another was to hold the flanks so that if there was any activity developing you could warn people. And we did a lot of liaison work where we would take the armoured cars up and help the artillery spotters.

"Generally speaking you could almost say it was long periods of sheer boredom with short periods of intense activity. It was during those short periods of intense activity that you either survived or didn't survive.

"Probably the most difficulty we had was when we were clearing the Scheldt estuary to open up the port of Antwerp. The 3rd Division was on one side and we were

on the other side. We were 2nd Division. Third Division had a pretty tough fight.

#### **Water Everywhere**

"Our main problem was that we had to keep our vehicles on top of the dykes because the Germans had cut them and the countryside was all flooded. So you were sitting up about 30 feet; if you moved an inch or two the thing would slide off into the mud. We didn't lose too many vehicles to enemy action but we lost them down in the bank and had to get a tow truck to retrieve them.

"The most sophisticated part was when we worked with the artillery after they brought in radar. They would pick up the enemy shells coming in so they could plot the trajectory and pin point the guns' locations.

"We did a lot of night patrols. This type of action took up the winter of 1944-45."

Lorne usually went into action in an armoured car. It carried a 37 millimetre gun as the main armament, a Browning submachine gun, co-axially mounted, as well as mortars and small arms equipment. Cars operated on roads; personnel carriers were tracked vehicles for off-road use.

#### **Taking Orders**

"We were infantry reconnaissance. There were three brigades of infantry in a division and we would be allocated to whichever brigade was working. We did whatever the brigadier wanted us to do. Then we would move over to another brigade and work with them. Our activity varied all the time. It might be liaison; it might be trying to get on the high ground and doing spotting; it might be probing an area.

"We lived like a bunch of Boy Scouts, you know,

because we carried all our own food and cooked all our own meals as a troop. We carried little gas stoves. The food came up in wooden packs.

"At daybreak when you were in action you had to have your breakfast over, your vehicle packed and motors running. Maybe you didn't move but you had to be ready to move at daybreak."

In February (1945) Lorne's unit was on the Maas River near the German border, heading for the Hochwald Forest. That was as far as Lorne got. His fighting ended when he "lost an argument with a mine."

Lorne and another soldier were injured; the third man in the vehicle was not hurt.

Fifty years after the event Lorne describes his injuries as "not too serious." Barb and perhaps others would dispute that assessment.

Lorne suffered permanent loss to his hearing, shrapnel wounds to his left leg and severe burns. He also lost his sight for several days.

"There is a lot of loose stuff flying around (inside the vehicle). You're stunned."

#### **Casualty Flight**

He was sent to a clearing station and then put on a train for base hospital in Brussels.

"That was right in the middle of the V-2 bombings; there were no windows left in the hospital. That's where I had the first treatment – they put a cast on my left leg for the shrapnel and I got my eyes cleaned out.

"We were supposed to be flown out right away to England but because of fog it took two or three days."

He landed at No. 17 General Hospital. Several days

later his full-length cast was removed and he got walking again.

"I met Barb and we got along pretty well. I thought it was a good idea to get to know her better."

And we all know how that worked out.

About the beginning of April Lorne – expecting to get back into action – joined the reinforcement unit at Woking. He was still in southern England when the war ended.

Because he was in England without a regimental contact he didn't have enough points for an early return to Canada. Instead he became an Army personnel officer at various depots, arranging to send others home. By then he was Captain Havard.

He got back to Canada in time for Christmas, 1945. Since he intended to return to university Lorne remained in the Army until the following June.

Three years later he earned a science degree (agriculture), which was the foundation of his career in the chemical industry.

*The wedding cake ready for the reception.*





## Ken James' mess tin and hair brush saved his life at Dieppe



**Ken James**

*Ken was chief steward of the Canadian Legion here for ten years. He moved to Milton from the 9th Line 15 years ago.*

**A**LTHOUGH KEN JAMES spent less than a day in action – at Dieppe – the war took eight years of his life, including almost 30 months as a prisoner-of-war.

He joined the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry in early 1940. He was 27 and working on a dairy farm at Stouffville, "the best job I had up to that time."

Ken took basic training at Camp Borden. He was impressed by the calibre of his sergeants, who had been in the militia. And he warmly recalls a ten-week Toronto recruiting campaign he took part in. That came about a year after he joined up.

"A truckload of us drivers went down to Windsor and got a bunch of jeeps. We had a loudspeaker on it blaring away with bombs falling and all that sort of thing."

The Toronto stint was a double advantage. Ken enjoyed the experience and it gave him lots of opportunity to be with Pat Catcher whom he had met a few months earlier.

Soon they made plans to get married before Ken went overseas. The Army, however, managed to throw a couple of curves at the young couple.

"We were told we weren't going overseas from Camp Borden until March (1942). So we had our wedding planned for October. But in September things got a bit complicated when the Army decided it needed our unit overseas right away.

"We had been sent out on a special assignment (preparing a mock battleground). We hadn't been there an hour when a despatch rider came out: 'Back to camp. You're on your last leave.'"

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*Ken found when he was hungry enough the veneer of civilization was pretty thin.*

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Ken hurried to see the colonel to get permission to marry; Pat ordered fast forward on her wedding dress. They hustled to Uxbridge where they got the town clerk out of bed at midnight for the marriage licence. They arranged for a minister and rushed out wedding invitations. Everyone came through – even the furniture dealer who delivered a bedroom suite on a day's notice.

On the Wednesday after the weekend wedding Ken was back at Borden expecting to leave any hour. Two weeks later the regiment boarded a train for the east coast.

The farmer in Ken wasn't impressed by the railway route through Quebec. He remembers "rocks, just pasture land and bush."

From Halifax a fleet of U.S. destroyers – four-masters – escorted the troopships to mid-Atlantic where the British Navy took over. When they got to the Irish Sea a Sunderland flying-boat joined them.

Ken's ship *Queen of the Pacific*, like many troop carriers, had been a luxury liner. But the peacetime passengers wouldn't have recognized the wartime scene, especially the poker game that started in the crowded cabin and continued throughout the night in the toilet.

"They were still playing when we got up to shave in the morning. There was one guy who had won just about everything. I don't know how much."

### **Grim Reminders**

The last hours of the trip, going up the Mersey, provided a fast education.

"There were funnels stuck about the water all over the place – where ships had been sunk. Once we got to dock they weren't long getting us out of Liverpool."

Ken went to a reinforcement camp at Whitley in southern England. He drove a jeep that pulled a two-pounder anti-tank gun; he was in "C" Company. Soon he was doing guard duty at a high-security beach area.

At night the soldiers armed with tommy-guns placed barbed wire entanglement across the roads and patrolled the sidewalks and beaches. They took their jobs more seriously than did an English officer who arrived one night in a car accompanied by two women. A soldier challenged him.

"Who do you think you are? I'm an officer."

When the officer tried to move the barbed wire to get to the beach a soldier put a bullet through the car radiator.

"He didn't go any farther," Ken says. "One guy got in to steer and the other guy had the 'tommy' on him. They took him up to Company headquarters and got the major out of bed. The boys later got recommended by the British Admiralty.

"Right on the beach our orders were to shoot and ask questions afterwards. They (officer and women) could have had a flashlight and been flashing signals to submarines – we didn't know.

#### **Halt!**

"We had one Captain in our unit who thought he was pretty smart. Somehow or other he got right down on the beach. He thought he was going to catch the boys off guard. But when the guard hit the bolt on his rifle the captain started yelling blue murder."

The regiment's cartoonist, Billy Prine, marked the event with a drawing of an officer crawling down the beach holding a bunch of grass above his head as camou-

flage. The soldiers loved it; there's no record of what the Captain thought.

At that stage of the war people in England expected a German attack. And Ken heard there already had been an invasion attempt.

"Very few people in England knew they were ever attacked but they were. This was before we got there but we heard about it."

The defence system included floating barrels of oil, Ken says. When the attack came the Air Force ignited the oil with incendiary bullets. Many of the Germans died in the flames.

"They never got attacked again," Ken says.

The Dieppe raid took place August 19, 1942, eleven months after Ken arrived in England.

"The first Dieppe job was supposed to have been in July. But the water wasn't right for landing. So we were given leave again. The first time we knew we were going to Dieppe. The second time we didn't know where we were going. We thought they had changed it (the destination) but they hadn't."

#### **On the Beach**

Aboard ship heading for the French coast intelligence officers showed the soldiers pictures of the beach. There was barbed wire everywhere and Ken knew right from the start that "we didn't have much chance."

Half way across the troops, packed in assault landing craft, were lowered to almost sea level. British sailors manned the two rear motors of one landing craft. One of the two, wearing a white sweater and brandishing a rifle, stood to issue a challenge:



*Ken with cousin Ruth Fisher while on leave in May 1942.*

"Come on, you buggers, we'll give you all the fighting you want."

"A white sweater!" Ken says. "They couldn't miss. He was dead before we even landed. So we knew that when that gate went down we had to move.

"We had beaten the Commandoes on getting 42 men out of a boat. They did it in nine seconds; we did it in seven, in training. I bet we got off in five that day. We knew we had to move.

"So anyway we went down and just kept going. How many of our platoon ever got to the (beach) wall I'll never know.

"A patrol in the English channel had spotted us coming in and Commandoes that were supposed to get into the town and silence the artillery never got in, at least all the way. So it was a shemozzle."

By the time Ken hit the beach a lot of Canadians had already fallen. As he charged for the shelter of the beach wall he recognized Billy Prine, the cartoonist.

He had been killed by the concussion of a mortar shell but there wasn't a mark on him, Ken says.

"He was easy to recognize. He was so small and very blonde."

A popular major who had been with the unit for many months was killed just as he reached the beach.

Ken recalls his beautiful wristwatch. "Some German got a dandy," he says.

#### **Against the Wall**

Ken reached the wall with about 15 others. They soon realized they were hopelessly trapped.

The walls were ten feet high. The Germans had excavated stones from the sea side edge and had piled them at intervals. The piles were topped with barbed wire.

In effect this created depressed pockets along the wall. Ken's group was isolated in one of them.

"If you got to the wall you couldn't go along any farther to see if there was a way out.

"Wooden markers were all over the beach. Germans in buildings near the beach were directing the artillery to a numbered marker.

"They could put it in your hip pocket. They were as accurate as anything. They were waiting, they knew we were coming."

Ken's group fired a bangalore torpedo to blow the wire off the top of the wall. A lance corporal started climbing a pieced-together aluminum ladder.

"He just got to the top and they landed a six-inch mortar in front of him. Blew him back and broke his arm; bits of beach gravel ripped into his face. But he wasn't critically hurt.

#### **Under Fire**

"The next mortar shell hit the guardrail along the beach wall showering us with fragments."

Ken felt pain in his foot but he couldn't see any damage to his boot. Later, however, he discovered his foot bleeding. He thinks he was hit by a small sliver of stone or shrapnel.

A young officer, looking for a way to break out, mounted one of the mounds of gravel. Bullets bounced off his helmet but caused no injury.

In another try a corporal managed to get a few feet over the wire before being marooned. Ken doesn't know whether

he was wounded or caught in the wire. George McRitchie crawled out and pulled him to safety. Neither was hit but Ken saw machine gun bullets ricocheting off the wire.

There was obviously no way to advance. And they certainly weren't getting any advice from the major who made it to the wall with them.

"Never opened his mouth all day long," Ken says. "Never said a word to anybody."

Ken was in charge of the two-inch mortar – he replaced the regular gunner who twisted his ankle hours before the troops embarked. When the time came to retreat from the wall, Ken laid a smoke screen behind the beach. Then he folded up the mortar and ran – the last one out except for the major.

"There was this young kid I passed – his right foot was just wide open. I yanked him to his feet and yelled for someone else. We took him out to a boat and pushed him over the side.

"I got around to the front to get in myself but I saw it was all full of wounded. So I blew up my Mae West (life preserver) and let go (of the boat)."

He stayed in the water as long as possible because he thought it was safer there.

#### Lucky Shot

Eventually he ran ashore to take shelter behind a beached tank-landing craft. Something hit him in the back and threw him forward. But he kept running.

Later when he unpacked his haversack he found two holes in his mess tin and his hairbrush smashed to smithereens. The bullet came to rest in his towel.

The group Ken joined surrendered late in the after-

noon. A German flier who had been shot down on the beach, "volunteered" to wave the white "flag," after some persuasion by a revolver-waving Canadian officer.

Ken had no idea how most of his companions made out. One, however, survived to share Ken's prison experience - Bob Higgins. They had chummed together a lot, partly because they didn't smoke and didn't drink.

Ken's long prison term began at a Dieppe hospital where he got an anti-tetanus shot for his foot wound. He then joined others in a wire-enclosed field until a train took them to Rouen, and to a camp at Verneuil.

#### Train of Hunger

Two weeks later they boarded another train for Germany. As it moved through the countryside it spread propaganda: in large letters on the outside of the cars were the words: "Churchill's Second Front."

The prisoners had other worries. For more than three weeks, including one week on the train, they existed on one small loaf of bread provided by the Germans and a bowl of pea soup served by the Red Cross part way through the trip.

"Thick and green, the soup was good. The bread was fairly heavy, made of potato and alfalfa meal, rolled in sawdust and baked. It was hard enough to sit on. It wasn't too bad if you toasted it."

When the Canadians reached Breitenstein camp (Stalag VIII (B)) in eastern Germany they weren't reassured. They saw Germans guarding Russians while brandishing huge bull whips.

"Of course, the Russians weren't in the Red Cross and that made all the difference."



Still the Canadians' treatment was hardly luxurious. Starving and unshaven for almost a month, they didn't appreciate the humour when a German officer explained: "We didn't invite you."

When a huge container of cabbage soup arrived the men couldn't control themselves.

"We ran to the dump, got a tin can and wolfed it down. It's a wonder it didn't scald our throats."

Civilized behaviour is quickly left behind when you're starving, Ken says.

Ken believes the camp held perhaps 200,000 prisoners. Parties were sent out to work in coal and salt mines, in the railway yards and elsewhere.

#### Aid For Russians

The Russians, who occupied a section about half a mile away, had to pass the Canadian quarters coming back from work assignments. Eventually this led to a ritual that gave some comfort to the tobacco-starved Russians.

The Canadians received cigarettes from the Red Cross and their families. Someone decided that the Canadians should collect the butts for the Russians.

"One man would go to the outside fence and throw a small box over the two walls. One Russian was permitted to step out of line to retrieve the butts. There was no scramble. Otherwise they would be shot."

Conditions were so terrible in the Russian camp, Ken says, that the prisoners would delay reporting deaths so they would continue getting the deceased's rations.

"They would keep a corpse three or four days – as long as they could stand him up while the count was on."

#### In Chains

The Canadians had a pretty serious problem of their own. A dispute about handcuffing of prisoners had developed between the Germans and the British. Ken says a German pilot, shot down over the English Channel, was found dead with his hands tied behind his back.

The Germans retaliated by tying up the Dieppe prisoners.

At first they gathered Ken's group in a field and tied both hands with rope; the men remained tied from eight in the morning till eight at night.

Eventually the ropes were replaced with chains. Although this was an improvement in some respects, the big disadvantage of the metal was that it made it impossible for prisoners to keep warm in winter.

After some months a camp commander arrived who didn't believe in tying up prisoners. For him it made no sense to have well trained and healthy Canadians confined to their cabins all day when the Germans were so short of labour.

Partly because of the commander's views, handcuffing eventually became a farce. Guards would apply the restraints each morning. But the handcuffs could be easily unlocked. The result was that the Canadians officially were shackled but in fact were free of restraints.

The word got around that if a German inspector were to visit, the camp would be advised in advance so that the Canadians could be appropriately handcuffed.

By the summer of 1943 the frustrated camp commander finally won his argument with his superiors, allowing the Canadians to join the labour force.

### Feudal Farm?

Ken was among a group of almost 50 Canadians sent to a huge farm camp close to the Polish border, near Stettin (Stalag IID). It was owned by Baron von Aberkrom, the chief of police in Berlin.

In his new role Ken had experiences he never had on a farm in southern Ontario.

"There were five thousand acres and I never saw a fence. The whole village belonged to the farm. They got their litre of milk and their vegetables and a cart full of coal and all that. It was a feudal system really.

"Some of them had their own chickens and geese. You should have seen them herding their geese just like a bunch of sheep.

"There were probably four thousand acres of potatoes. There was also a big factory where they processed potatoes into flour and made industrial products.

"We went to work lots of times with scythes to cut alfalfa hay for the cattle. They had three oxen pulling the wagon; two or three guys would be cutting. Sometimes the soldier would lay his rifle down and cut; nobody was going to run away."

Usually things were peaceful. Some Polish prisoners even were permitted to visit their nearby homes on weekends.

But it wasn't always serene. Ken remembers a rainy day when a newly-assigned German soldier threatened to shoot anyone who moved. He wanted them to work, rain or no rain.

### Appeal Allowed

The Canadians, who had no change of clothing,

refused. They suggested an appeal to the farm inspector. The guard acquiesced and the inspector resolved the issue by allowing the Canadians to work in the farm buildings.

Later on Ken and another soldier – Alf Woodland of Goodwood – volunteered for full-time work in the dairy barn. They enjoyed working with the cattle and their conditions were different from those of outside workers. As a result Ken and Alf didn't join in when the field workers called a work stoppage.

Ken's term at the farm ended unexpectedly in the early fall of 1944. During an examination arranged by the Red Cross after many repatriated British prisoners had been found sick, Ken and five or six Canadians tested positive for tuberculosis.

He was sent to a prisoners' sanatorium at Elderhorst, between Leipzig and Dresden. He spent six months there and was considered well enough to act as batman for an Australian surgeon, a colonel, who was also a prisoner.

"Eventually when everything was arranged we were put on a train for Geneva. We met a repatriation train of Germans coming from the opposite direction. We were counted – I don't know if it was one of us for two Germans, or what."

*Ken James (bottom right) with chums and fellow POWs.*



Shortly afterwards they arrived at Marseilles where they boarded a Red Cross ship.

It took about a month to sort out the paper work. Ken recalls a lot of discussion about who was, or could be, an American citizen.

"They moved the boat outside the port – the two-or three-mile limit – and then they opened the bar. We were all given \$100 and a complete outfit from the skin out. We had been in the same clothes since 1942."

In March 1945 Ken arrived in New York. The train trip to Montreal and Toronto – in sealed coaches – was a bitter-sweet experience. Ken knew Pat would be waiting at the Toronto station. But on the way he was intensely questioned by Army investigators seeking any scrap of information about conditions in Germany.

#### Long Road to Health

It took almost three years for Ken to get healthy again. He spent two and a half years at Weston Sanatorium. While there he had a major operation: doctors removed four and a half ribs to permanently collapse part of a lung.

He later transferred to a hospital at Peterborough where, on a special diet, he briefly gained 80 pounds. He left the hospital a few days before it burned to the ground.

Finally he could join Pat in their new home in the Broadview-Danforth district, partly paid for by Ken's \$54 a month private's pay. He later also received 25 cents a day for his term in prison camp.

For the War Claims Commission in Ottawa Ken was Case No. 6518. In July, 1954 he received a reply to his claim. The Deputy Commissioner, James Francis, made this recommendation:

"I find from the evidence that the claimant was a Canadian within the meaning of the War Claims Rules at all relevant times and that the claimant was in custody a total of 881 days. After being forced to participate in the so-called Dieppe march, he was shackled for 120 days or upwards, and was transported by box-car on four occasions.

"In all the circumstances of the case I recommend that the claimant be awarded \$336.20."

And that's what Ken got.



*Hundreds of Canadian soldiers were taken prisoner during the disastrous raid on Dieppe.*

## Marie Clements took on unique wartime role in RAF



**Marie Clements**

*Marie, a Torontonians, came to Milton in the late 1970s when she married W. Bradford Clements.*

**M**ARIE NASH CLEMENTS was the only Canadian woman to become a wartime weather forecaster in the Royal Air Force.

Marie and two girlfriends arrived in England in 1936 for an extended holiday. They were about to come back home when war broke out.

"I probably could have got space on the *Athenia* but decided against it," she says.

The *Athenia* was torpedoed on that voyage in the early days of the war.

Marie took a job in a bank – and spent weekends driving a Red Cross ambulance – until her interest in mathematics led her to the meteorological service of the RAF. That was in 1941.

After six weeks training and half a year as a weather plotter Marie applied for a course in weather forecasting. Her class of seven were the first women accepted in the six-month forecasting course at the University of London.

Marie was now an officer qualified to brief aircrews before take-off.

It was important for the airmen to know what weather they could expect enroute, of course; it was perhaps even more important to know what to expect when they got back. Forecasting when and where fog might occur was crucial. It could make the difference between a safe return and disaster.

The hardest part of her experience was going to breakfast to find often that several crews had not come back from night missions.

Her strangest memory is about an elusive fog. Early

*Marie was an officer qualified to brief aircrews on weather conditions before takeoff.*

one morning – the crews had not yet returned – a colleague phoned with disturbing news. Fog had arrived.

Marie was stunned because conditions didn't indicate fog.

"Come down and take a look," the colleague said.

As soon as Marie arrived she stepped onto the balcony: "I don't see any fog."

Her embarrassed colleague then realized that the fog he had seen had come from his pipe.

Marie served at seven RAF stations in England and Scotland. During her service she married James Russell of the RAF; he died in an air accident shortly after the war.

Marie returned to Toronto in 1947; she wanted to continue in weather work but in those days there was no place for women in the Canadian meteorological service.

Marie rarely sees any of her wartime colleagues. But she thinks of them often, especially on Armistice Day when, as head of the local IODE, she lays a wreath at the cenotaph in Victoria Park.



## Subs brought spurts of terror but storm's agony lasted days



**Bruce Kitchen**

*Bruce is a lifelong resident of Milton. His mother's family (Morleys) came here in the late 1800s.*

**B**RUCE KITCHEN LEFT HIS JOB at P.L. Robertson's in November, 1943 as soon as he turned 18. When he got to sea less than a year later he crowded a lot of experiences into the last eight months of the war. And into the few days of Halifax riots right afterwards.

From the first Bruce knew he wanted to be a radar operator. But the Navy didn't think his grade ten was good enough; Bruce proved otherwise at a qualifying test. He took a good part of his training at the St. Hyacinthe, Quebec, radar school.

He was posted to the corvette *Kamsack* doing convoy duty on the triangle run. The vessels would sail from Halifax to Newfoundland, or perhaps 600 or 700 miles into the Atlantic, before dropping the convoy off to the mid-ocean escort. They would then pick up the westward-bound freighters and escort them to Boston, or New York. On the third leg of the triangle they would pick up a new convoy and head for Halifax where ships would be organized for the trans-Atlantic run.

Normally Bruce was on watch four hours as radar operator and off eight hours.

"But on the eight hours you were working. Work on the decks, cleaning the mess decks - just general work. Cleaning guns, checking depth charges."

In the afternoon there were two "dog watches" - from 4 to 6 and 6 to 8 o'clock. This changed the watch rotation so that a sailor wouldn't be on duty for the same hours two days in a row.

Bruce got six, eight hours sleep if there were no problems, no "action stations."

At night radar had a key role in controlling the convoy.

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*The officer wanted pictures but all Bruce had to work with were specks of light.*

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Ships showed up as dots on the radar screen.

"You had a plot - you knew all the dots - the names of the ships. And, of course, you sailed a zig-zag and the freighters were sailing their own zig-zag formation.

"You were like a cowboy herding cattle. Although the ship was off there a couple of hundred yards perhaps, you couldn't see it. You kept track with those little pinpoints of light. If they were getting a little too close together, or a little too far apart, on the radar screen you would report it to the bridge. Our officers on the bridge would contact either the ship itself or the major escort and they would put the thing back in position.

"You got lots of little accidents and things during the night - they would get too close to each other. On a calm night or bright moonlit night it wasn't so bad. But you hated bright moonlit nights because the subs could see you as well as you could see."

Bruce remembers a lot of monotony. But there was an edge to it because he never could tell when he would be called to action stations.

Mostly the call came when a ship's "asdic" (similar to underwater radar) picked up a "ping", which could mean a submarine. The ship that picked up the "ping" would go to action stations immediately but other ships in the convoy might not.

"A convoy covers a lot of water - you might be spread out a mile between ships because they were big lumbering ships and if anyone gets a little off course it doesn't take long to close a mile.

"If a ship on the far side got a contact they would go to action stations and would notify the flotilla leader and he

would send a signal to the rest of the ships. And the other guys would get prepared. Often you would know without being told that you might soon be called to action stations - if a ship was hit you might hear a dull 'boom' through the water.

"Often you would be playing cards on the mess deck and someone would say 'Here we go!' Everyone would get seaboots on just in case. Once you heard the action stations you wanted to get up top as quick as you could."

But the sub scares weren't the only fearful experience. The misery caused by storms could last for days.

"I think of one trip when it was really rough. I suppose it was hurricane force winds. I'm sure that for three or four days we sailed a lot of miles but never went anywhere. We were headed from Halifax to Newfoundland. A number of the ships had to break off and go back because of damage from the storm."

Bruce and other crew members were wet a lot of the time. Water flooded the mess deck to a depth of three or four inches. As the ship rolled the water built up, first to one side and then the other. And the sailors' lockers - really clothing chests containing all their clothes - got soaked.

That was when Bruce was glad to have woollen clothes. Even when wet they provided some warmth.

Getting from one place to another during a storm was frightening.

"You had lifelines (ropes) that went from the different hatches to the deck. Say you were going to the quarterdeck to check on depth charges, or to be a lookout back there. You grabbed the rope. In between waves you ran. But sometimes you got caught (between waves). Water would

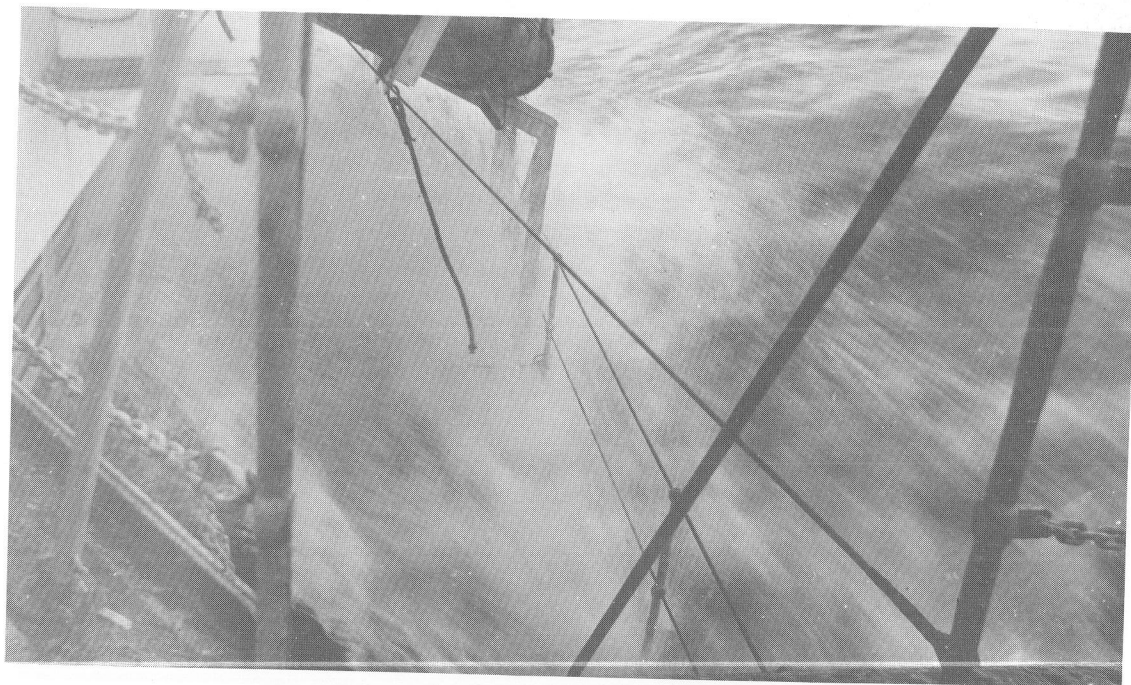
come boiling back - over your knees, or if it was real bad, it could be your armpits."

And there was a real danger that if you lost your footing you could be swept overboard. This didn't happen on any of the runs Bruce made but he heard about such incidents - and even about one sailor who was swept overboard by one wave and miraculously deposited safely on deck by another.

#### Seasickness Didn't Count

"You were beat after a few days of it. You didn't sleep. You couldn't sleep really.

*Heavy seas often meant misery.  
But seasickness wasn't classed  
as a sickness.*



"Seasickness wasn't classed as a sickness. You'd be sick as a dog but you still had to do your work. I was sick quite a bit on that corvette. But you got so you could operate. They gave us pills quite often. But often you would throw them up before they got to do you any good.

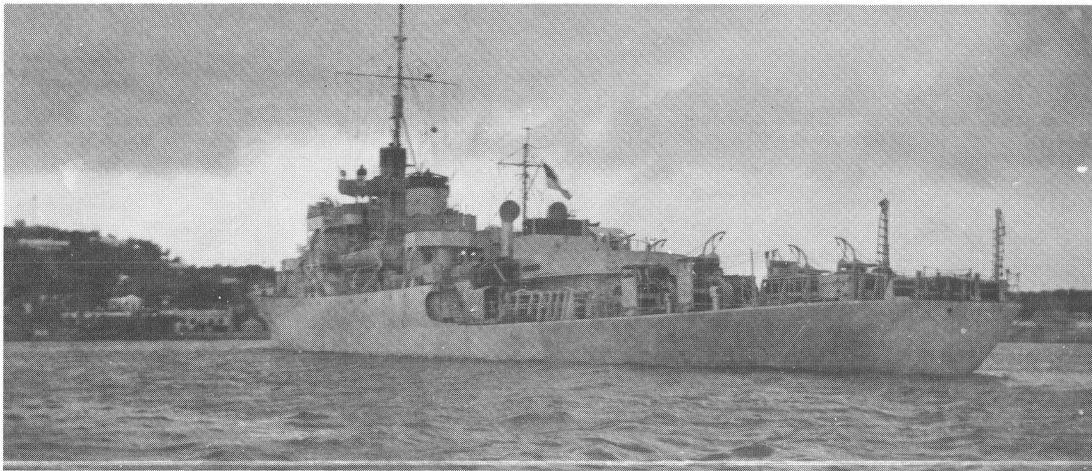
"Sometimes they came around before you sailed 'Does anyone need a seasick pill?' Lots of us took them but it would be 20 minutes later and you would be throwing them up.

"It depended on what you were doing. If you had had a night ashore it wasn't a good place to have a hangover."

A more pleasant experience was the rum issue at 11 o'clock each morning.

"The amount depended...if the boys had all been on their best behaviour they'd get two ounces. If they were causing the officers some problem or getting in trouble ashore, you might find you were getting about half an ounce and a triple shot of water.

*HMCS Buckingham*



"The ship's messenger went through with a bosun's pipe and he piped it and then called out, 'Up Spirits.' If no officers were around he would add, 'Stand fast the Holy Ghost.' In other words, some people because of their religion didn't drink so 'Stand fast the Holy Ghost.'"

#### **Anti-Submarine Action**

The *Kamsack* often took part in anti-submarine work; it was not always easy for Bruce to know just what was happening.

"You have to remember how big the convoy was. Lots of times you would hear an explosion but you might not see too much. If it was an ammunition ship, or a tanker, and it was on the other side of the convoy you would see the explosion. You would see the streaks in the sky. Of course, a tanker would flame up and burn for a long time.

"We saw lots of anti-submarine action. Going to action stations to keep them down. We never even picked up survivors (of freighter crews).

"Of course, you didn't stop anyway; you had a ship doing a stern sweep to do that. They weren't supposed to stop, even then. They tried to pick them up as they went along."

Bruce recalls a hectic run when two or three ships - he couldn't be sure because it was a large convoy - were lost just east of Newfoundland, a very dangerous area. Whatever the losses may have been, the naval crews weren't told about them. Rumours were often pretty accurate.

The convoy usually was protected by corvettes, minesweepers and one destroyer. Minesweepers were about the same size as corvettes, Bruce says, although a little fatter-hulled and flatter.



The destroyers - larger, much faster, manoeuvrable, and with bigger guns - usually took the lead and covered the front of the convoy.

"Sometimes at night she would drop back to the stern so that a sub couldn't come to the surface and cruise up on you from behind.

"The rest were corvettes and minesweepers. That's why they called us 'the small boat navy.'"

#### Too Many Needles

After about two months with *Kamsack* Bruce was transferred to the frigate *Buckingham*. He remembers it well because it almost resulted in his being charged with a serious offense.

"We were coming into Halifax harbour. As we sailed in I was on the deck party for entering harbour. We saw this brand new frigate tied along the jetty (at Dartmouth).

It looked fine. But after hearing a description by the chief petty officer Bruce decided he wanted no part of it. He felt that way because of the arrangement for storing ammunition, depth charges, fuel and other materials. Wherever he would be on the vessel, he believed, he would be in deep trouble if she were hit.

But the Navy wanted Bruce aboard. As soon as the *Kamsack* tied up a runner arrived with a chit drafting Bruce ashore. He went straight to HMCS *Stadacona* where they gave him two inoculations.

Next day the loudspeaker system called him to the office: he was to be ready within 30 minutes to join the new ship. Somehow in the rush he got two more needles.

Aboard the *Buckingham* that night he had a watch to stand.

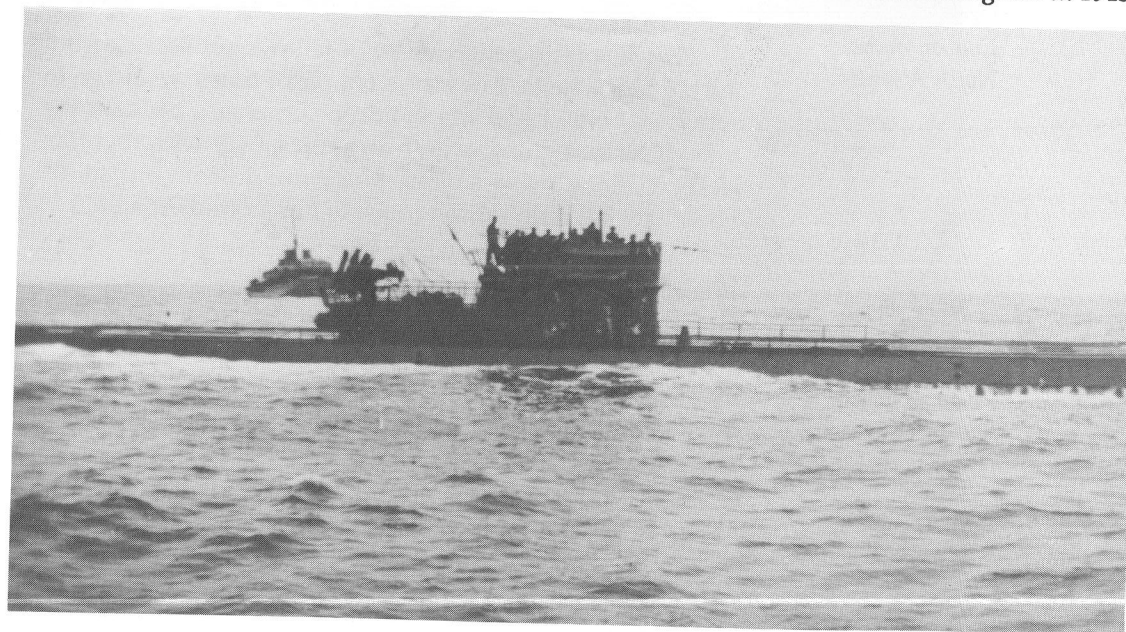
"I slept through part of it. And they were going to charge me. (In the First World War some soldiers were shot for falling asleep on duty.) It suddenly dawned on me I should tell somebody I got a double set of needles. That got me out of it. But geez, I was sick."

#### A Jacket for Two

And there was another foul-up. In the rush to get him aboard someone forgot to order him a life-jacket.

They were on their way to Bermuda for "workups" - trial runs - for the *Buckingham*. (It didn't take long for "buck-ing ham" to become known as the "Galloping Pig" and cartoonists portrayed a heroic hog performing prodigious feats.)

*German submarine captured by  
HMCS Buckingham in 1945.*







*Convoy in the  
North Atlantic.*

"It was pretty rough. A lot of fellows got seasick from the big long swells. Anyway, a couple of times we did go to action stations. I had my hand on someone's back all the time. If he was going over, I was going over with that life-jacket. (Unlike many sailors, Bruce could swim but somehow that skill didn't mean much to him in mid-Atlantic.)

"We were in Bermuda for four weeks and I didn't get a life-jacket until just before we left."

The frigate had a crew of about 125, fifty or so more than normally served on a corvette.

During the "workups" in Bermuda one of Bruce's jobs was to train radar recruits who had never been to sea. He liked the experience.

He also liked the frigate's radar equipment, which was much better and more accurate than what he was used to.

Bruce had heard many stories about poor quality radar units on Canadian vessels earlier in the war. The equip-

ment was manufactured in Britain and the Royal Navy had first call on updated sets. The old sets were reportedly passed on to the Canadian Navy.

In any event, Bruce soon found what the new radar - and a little imagination - could do. It was just before dawn somewhere off New York; Bruce and his partner reported a contact.

"First thing the officer on the bridge wanted to know - what is it?

"Some of them still thought you had a picture; all you had was a dot, a light.

#### **Right On!**

"I put my hand over the 'voice pipe' to the bridge, and the other guy said to me, 'What will we say?' I didn't know.

"Then he decided 'I'm going to tell him, possible sub on the surface.'

"I said 'or a fishing boat!'"

That's what they reported and the *Buckingham* closed in on the target. She fired a star shell, which lit up a very frightened fishboat crew trying desperately to send a peaceful signal.

"When eight o'clock came and they changed our watch the First Lieutenant on the bridge called us up. So we went up wondering what kind of trouble we were in.

"When we got there he commended us. 'Just terrific.' He said he had a perfect idea of what was going on all the time. Our identification was perfect. We stood there like heroes. We didn't tell him we'd pulled that one out of the blue."

Bruce knew that was a far different experience from what had often happened earlier in the war. Because of

many malfunctions, officers got so they hated to depend on radar.

Even later the sets often presented problems for the people who were supposed to keep them in good repair.

#### **When in Doubt, Kick**

"I remember one case where the set went out on us. We did what we could as operators. Then there was a chief petty officer, a technician, who was supposed to fix it. He spent two or three hours.

"What did you guys do? Did you try anything yourselves?"

"We told him we turned it off, we turned it on, did this and that.

"He said, 'Did you kick it?'"

"No!"

"Damn it. It's the first thing you always do.' He gave it a kick. I was sitting in front of the range finder. It lit up. It went out again. Then it came on and worked fine.

"He said, 'For God's sake, always do that before you call me.'"

#### **Trans-Atlantic Convoys**

During his early days aboard the *Buckingham* Bruce was on trans-Atlantic convoy duty. This meant picking up vessels a few hundred miles off Newfoundland and escorting them to the Irish coast. There the escort vessels reversed direction, picking up westbound vessels. Bruce never did get into Londonderry or any British port. Any repairs needed by his ship were done in Newfoundland.

Later the *Buckingham* was assigned to a "striking force" - a group of four or five ships that operated independently; they weren't assigned to convoy duty. Often they used a radio directional finder to track down submarines.

"German U-boats radioed to Germany every morning, usually in code. But you didn't care; you could pick up the direction by this finder. Between them (the various ships of the striking force) you could triangulate. And you steamed for it. And the next morning she (sub) would do it again. Eventually you could wear it down until you knew almost where it was.

"Then you would steam in there five abreast trying to pick up a 'ping' on your asdic. And when you did you threw everything you had. Five ships spread out - you'd cover four miles of ocean maybe.

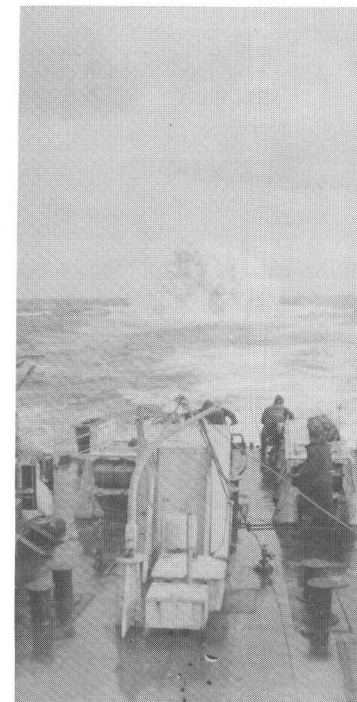
"You'd throw charges off both sides, off the stern; you'd throw what they called a ten-charge pattern. Then you would sail on, whip around and come from the other direction and try to pick it up again. Lots of times you threw a lot of depth charges. And lots of times you never knew whether you hit anything or not."

The authorities were conservative about giving credit for sub sinkings. Bruce remembers one occasion when the officers of the *Buckingham* were sure they had destroyed a submarine, but still there was no official confirmation. Usually the authorities demanded physical evidence such as a piece of the destroyed sub. Bruce says the submarine crews would discharge clothes or other items to persuade their attackers that they had been successful and could stop dropping depth charges.

A Canadian vessel picked up a "ping" off Halifax and left the other ships to concentrate on the attack. The under-sea vessel went close to a shoal attempting to "confuse" the asdic. But the asdic operators thought they could distinguish the submarine.

"We spent about 30 hours - we threw everything we

*Depth charge  
exploding.*





*Christmas at sea and the season ends by throwing the Christmas tree over the stern.*

had on it. We would go over it and throw - go back around and throw them again. They (officers) were sure that we had got that one; she was down to stay. So we sailed into Halifax and there was a rumour around there for quite a while that we had sunk it. But nothing 'official.'"

#### **Loss of the *Esquimalt***

A few weeks before the end of the war the *Buckingham* had tied up at Halifax when a corvette dashed in "whooping" urgently. Bruce heard ambulance sirens as the shore patrol closed off the area. The corvette was bringing in survivors of the torpedoed *Esquimalt*.

"Allen Marcellus was on it - he was a very good friend of mine. I didn't know for a long time whether he had got off or not. We knew some of them had got off or they wouldn't be taking the ambulances. The *Esquimalt* was sunk not far off Halifax. We lost a lot of ships not far off Halifax."

Bruce eventually pieced together what had happened thanks in part to a letter from his fiancée, Norma Elsworthy. Norma reported that Allen was home on leave.

Although he wasn't hurt in the explosion, Allen had spent hours in the frigid water, standing on a rope between two floats.

It took months before the feeling came back to his legs, Bruce says. He could put a cigarette to his legs without feeling a thing. Eventually he recovered and made his home in Milton until his death a few years ago.

#### **Black Flag of Surrender**

Immediately after the *Esquimalt* sinking Bruce took on a job that gave him a great deal of satisfaction. The *Buckingham* and another frigate *Inch Arran* were ordered

to pick up a submarine that was flying the black flag of surrender. (Just the night before the submarines were operating as usual - one attempted to sink the frigate *Sarnia* off the Nova Scotia coast.)

As a member of the assault team Bruce was scheduled to be part of the boarding party.

"They had us all dolled up with our packs, our sandwiches. We all made sure we had lots of cigarettes from the canteen so we could do deals.

"Just shortly before we dropped the seaboat in the water it blew up a storm. So they wouldn't let us go aboard. We took her in on the surface. I think it was three days and three nights. That's how far out we were when we picked it up.

"All guns were trained on it; at night radar picked it up. So you still kept the guns on it.

"Instead of three watches to split up the day you had two. You were not getting any sleep - the mess decks still had to be cleaned.

"It was fairly rough. And it must have been a lot rougher for those German sailors because they had to stay on top. If they had attempted to go under we would have depth-charged them.

"We took them into Shelburne (Nova Scotia) and we thought we would still get aboard because she surrendered to us. But when we got into Shelburne they sent the shore patrol out with boats to take the war prisoners off. So the shore patrol got all the souvenirs or whatever was on it.

Every one of those (submarine) guys gave the Nazi salute as they got off. It was just a few days before that a sub - perhaps this very one - had torpedoed the *Esquimalt*.

We weren't feeling very friendly towards it."

The *Buckingham* was approaching Halifax when the crew got word the war was over.

#### **It's Over**

"Another guy and I were doing the sailors' favourite work - mopping the deck. They turned on the SRE (ship's radio entertainment) to broadcast the German surrender.

"The first thing we did was tip the mops in the pail, hook the pail handles and throw them overboard. That was it. About two and a half hours later we were in Halifax. We were the first ship in. And you almost felt as if you won the war yourself. Every jetty was packed with people. Every boat was blowing its whistle. And we were all heroes.

"Two days later we were a bunch of bums because we had the Halifax riot.

"I was there and they pretty well ruined the downtown. The Navy got blamed for it."

But Bruce is sure it wasn't all the Navy's doing. He saw the windows of a large department store - he thinks it was Eaton's - smashed right out. Half-ton trucks were backed up to collect racks full of clothing. And they weren't Navy trucks.

"You're in the Navy and maybe you could steal a bottle of rum but you couldn't steal all those big items."

#### **Bad Decision**

Bruce says the riot could have been avoided. The Navy knew there was a lot of ill feeling; just before the end of the war it tried to arrange to have the Navy shore patrol take over policing of downtown Halifax for the first few days of the armistice.

"The mayor said he didn't need any help to patrol his

city. So when it finally blew open, he was glad to call for help before the first night was out."

Bruce says troops were called in from Debert (Nova Scotia) to control the streets. It was a mistake.

"Most of them were veterans who had come back from Italy; they were guys who had served. So as they backed us up on the street we would leave little piles of beer. They just stacked their rifles and joined us.

"So they flew troops down from Camp Borden - I think green fellows - but it was pretty well over by then.

"There was a lot of pent-up emotion there and it just blew. The people (in Halifax) were very indifferent, I felt. To be fair we have to remember that for five years this small



*Dockside  
trolley in  
Hamilton,  
Bermuda.*



city was filled with Navy, Army and Air Force people passing through."

Bruce found the atmosphere in Newfoundland quite different. He couldn't imagine any riot there because of the people's down-to-earth friendliness.

#### Home Again

With the war over in Europe Bruce signed on to fight in the Pacific, as many of the young sailors did. Some of the crew were to sail the *Buckingham* to the west coast while others took further training before going by rail to Vancouver.

"But while we were getting our advanced training (St. Hyacinthe) they stopped it because the Americans had dropped the bomb. But the Navy still planned to put crews aboard some of the ships."

Some sailors were being assigned to those ships, others were being sent home. Two big boards displayed the names - Bruce's name was on both boards.

"Believe it or not, the same day I was on the top of the chart in both groups. I went to see the chief petty officer. 'What do I do?'

"'If I was you, Son, I'd go home.' So I did."

At Toronto's Union Station his family greeted him - a private re-union for a homecoming serviceman. When they stepped out of the station it was quite a contrast - excited crowds watched the returning 48th Highlanders marching down the street.

Bruce started back at P.L. Robertson's immediately; about a month later the very busy people at HMCS York gave him his discharge.

Newly-married, Bruce and Norma began building their

home on Lydia Street. It took three years.

Bruce then thought about joining the Reserve Navy. But because he didn't have a car and the closest Navy base was in Hamilton, he eventually opted for the Lorne Scots; Bruce had served with the militia unit before the war.

#### Post-war Piper

"I knew some of the guys that were playing in the pipe band. So I took some training and learned to play the pipes. And spent about 18 years, maybe 19 years, with them.

"On Remembrance Day we'd go to Port Credit, Streetsville, Milton, Brampton and Orangeville and get home maybe at midnight. But you never got paid for any of that. We should have charged really. It would have helped the regiment out. Because we were a local regiment that was the way we gave something back to the community.

"We got invited (1960) over to Edinburgh for the Tattoo - that was a five-week trip. Played with all the British bands and it was a good show. Sometimes you would play three performances in a day: afternoon, a matinee, and then just after dinner.

"Sometimes it would be pouring rain but they went on anyway. I can remember marching up and down the esplanade in front of the castle, pouring rain and all the drummers hollering 'Go home, you buggers.'"

Bruce retired from the Robertson-Whitehouse plant after working there 47 years.



*Bruce was with the Lorne Scots Pipe Band that played in Edinburgh in 1960. Pipers in front are Pipe Major Joe Sellors, Dudley Ervin, Bruce Kitchen, Don McCallum, Ken Brush, Bill Kress, Harvey Brush and Bill Robertson. Standing behind are Sam Harrop, Wayne McCraney, Bus Featherstone, Don McEachern, Jim Murray, Don McKenzie, Jack Pearson and Hank McCraney.*

## Mike Ledwith missed the far east ••but saw service in England



**Mike Ledwith**

*Mike moved from Dundas to Milton soon after the war to operate a grocery store.*

**I**N DECEMBER, 1943, Mike Ledwith, working at the John Bertram machine tool manufacturing plant in Dundas, had a decision to make. He had about 300 hours left to complete his journeyman's papers as a machinist and fitter. Would he complete the course or join the Navy?

At 19 he opted for the service; he enlisted at *HMCS Star* in Hamilton. He became a Stoker, 2nd class, and according to Mike, "that's about as low as you can get."

As he recalls, his first few months were spent running up and down hills. It didn't help much that his fitness instructor happened to be the brother of John Fisher, well-known then as "Mr. Canada" for his patriotic radio broadcasts.

Occasionally Mike did all-night shore patrol on the streets of Hamilton, mostly to prevent hard-drinking sailors from ending up in jail. It was two hours on, two off, throughout the night.

After three months he was posted to *HMCS Cornwallis*, near Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia. What did he get there? More fitness, more running – even tougher than before. What he remembers best – or worst – was the three-mile run before breakfast.

Obviously Mike was pretty fit by the time he was posted to Halifax three months later. *HMCS Stadacona* and Halifax were bursting with thousands of sailors. Mike spent some of his hours cleaning boilers and installing ventilating fans in Navy ships.

Because of the space shortage the Navy was encouraging servicemen to find lodgings off-base. Mike and three friends crowded into one room in a boarding house.

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*What he remembers best – or worst – was the three-mile run before breakfast.*

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"There was a tremendous shortage of labour in Halifax," Mike says. "I had no trouble finding a part-time job filling bottles in a Coca Cola plant."

### **Making Headway**

Shortly afterwards Mike ran into an old friend, Tom Dobson, who used to deliver groceries for the Ledwith store in Dundas. Now he was Lieutenant Commander Dobson of the *Woodstock*, a Canadian destroyer.

Mike told his friend of a change of thinking about his career. He and many of his friends had decided that, given a choice, they would rather serve somewhere else than below decks in the engine room. Mike asked Tom Dobson about a transfer to the *Woodstock*.

The very next day Mike was notified of an overseas posting, the result of an earlier application to the newly-established Fleet Air Arm of the Canadian Navy.

Mike and some 20,000 other servicemen sailed in the *Aquitania*. Bunks were five tiers high. Aboard Mike met three friends from Dundas; two of them became war casualties a few months later. One was shot down and killed; another, a soldier, was injured in battle and died in a Toronto hospital.

The crossing itself was uneventful. "As we approached the Irish coast we heard something about a submarine but nothing happened. We landed at Greenoch."

He was transferred to the Royal Navy for a year and a half with the initial group of Canadians destined for the first Canadian aircraft carrier, the *Magnificent*.

He was soon assigned to Watford Junction near London where he worked on electrical wiring of Swordfish, torpedo-equipped bi-planes that operated from shipdeck.

### Bomb Watch

Every other night he did rooftop duty watching for buzz bombs. "We could hear the bomb's motor. When the sound stopped the bomb was about to come down. Our job was to notify ground control about the bomb's direction so they could take whatever emergency action was necessary.

"Not long afterwards the Germans started using rockets that gave no warning. One rocket could destroy a whole block."

Mike's own experience with the air raid warning system was far from terrifying.

"A friend and I were commuting to London when we heard the air raid siren. We rushed to ask someone where the air raid shelter was.

"'It's over there,' he said. 'Anyway, that's the all-clear.'"

Mike served for a time at an airport near Stafford, the pottery centre in the Midlands. Part of his work was checking the folding mechanism on *Hurricanes* and *Barracudas*, planes that operated from aircraft carriers.

Later he went to Winchester to take a course on a new naval sighting mechanism for torpedoes. He was then assigned to Kentail, a land base at Prestwick; he was there when V-E Day was declared.

### V.E. Day with Robbie Burns

"All but a skeleton crew were given leave and they spliced the main brace.

"I didn't wait for my rum ration. Most of us headed for the nearby towns of Ayr and Prestwick.

"We danced in the street and visited a pub where Robbie Burns once drank – or so we were told. But perhaps

what impressed us most was the end of the wartime blackout. The lights stayed on all night."

### Winding Down

Mike has many memories of his wartime service in Britain. He often visited relatives he knew as a small boy growing up in England. Many of his leaves were spent in Coventry, the cathedral city that was so terribly bombed.

Towards the end of the war in Europe, Mike volunteered to serve in the Far East. When Japan surrendered, however, these volunteers were offered the option of leaving the service. He took it.

Afterwards he was sorry he didn't stay on. By leaving the Navy he missed a two-year postwar tour around the world made by a Canadian aircraft carrier.

Instead, after a brief return to Bertram's in Dundas he bought a small Main Street store in Milton. That was the start of a 30-year career; Mike prospered and expanded to become a full-line grocery business. Today the store is operated by Quality Greens.

*Mike Ledwith in uniform is shown with relatives in Coventry. From the left are Rebecca, Mike, Edith Richards, Sandra and Richard.*





## Wartime Amsterdam: no food, no fuel and public executions



**Nelly Lorenz  
in Dutch Naval Uniform**  
*Looking for a family home about 20 years ago, Nelly settled on affordable Milton after checking out many southern Ontario towns.*

**N**ELLY LORENZ, LIVING IN AMSTERDAM, was 12 when the Germans invaded Holland and 17 when the Second World War ended. But she feels she never was a teenager.

"During those five years there were no men – no boys for Nelly Singerling. No food, no electricity. There was nothing. That really made an impact on my life. I was never allowed to be a teenager," Nelly says.

The war also left Nelly with a haunting fear of the German language. This began soon after radio broadcasts were interrupted to tell of the bombing of Rotterdam.

Strict blackout orders were among the first of the German orders: "Machen die Lichten aus!" (Turn off your lights.) The German songs pressed upon the Dutch were another sore point.

"I still hear the language. I have nothing against the Germans but the language gets in my ears. And it still bothers me as of today." (Nelly studied German in school; she reads and writes the language but does not speak it.)

For most of the war, Nelly says, there were virtually no Dutch males in Amsterdam between the ages of 16 and 40.

### Forced Labour

Her 16-year-old brother, Frederik, was picked up off the street; he spent four years in the chemical centre of Ludwigshafen as a slave labourer in a war factory.

"I don't think he could even say goodbye – I don't remember. But we heard from the Red Cross that he was O.K.

"He had to work every day from very early to very late. Little food. Little clothing."

At the end of the war the family got word that he was

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*When Nelly recalls the Canadians' march into Amsterdam her voice quakes.*

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free, but undernourished. Before he could return to Amsterdam he was sent to a farm in southern Holland, (Bor Province) where food was comparatively plentiful. He finally arrived home in mid-June 1945.

For most of the Dutch people the war meant years of near-starvation; many in Amsterdam and other cities starved to death, or died because undernourished bodies could not fight off disease. (Nelly still bears scars – three "holes" in her legs – of wartime hunger.)

Food became scarcer as the war went on. When the Germans first came, Nelly recalls, they thought they had reached the promised land – food everywhere.

"In no time they took it away from us. We got coupons for bread, sugar, coffee and other foods. One loaf of bread per week.

"For me, a young girl, it was more than enough. For my two brothers it was not enough – I think a loaf was 800 grams.

"The first year was not too bad. People who were rich could buy food. People who were poor found it some place else – they traded things.

### Hungry Years

"In the second year you could buy hardly anything on your coupons. The situation got worse and worse and worse.

"I stood in line 12 hours at the fish market. I was young – a lot of older people were not able to stand the strain.

"People went outside town to the farmers; hopefully they could pick up a couple of potatoes and maybe some vegetables.

"As the war went on there was absolutely nothing. For

rich people money was not worth a penny any more. You couldn't buy anything. The only way was trade or steal or whatever you could do."

The normal practice in Amsterdam had been to pick up vegetable scraps from the homes to deliver to the farmers. Then people began to eat the potato peels. After a while there were no peels.

"People lost weight like anything. I went down so much that my parents took me to the doctor to ask for extra coupons. I had fainted often in school. (Students in Amsterdam went to classes half days during the war. Space was short because the Germans had taken over many of the school buildings.)

"In the doctor's office the room started to turn around very fast. I fainted. We got the extra coupons.

"I was also sent to some kind of health centre outside Amsterdam to gain weight. The place was run by Germans.

"When I came in the first thing I was supposed to say was, 'Heil Hitler.' Of course, I refused, being a rebel. There was no way I would do anything like that. They offered me a chocolate bar to say it. Having a chocolate bar – that was really something! But anyway I never did say it.

"In the evening we sang songs like 'Und wir fahren gegen Engeland' (We fight against England.) I would never sing those songs. There was no way they would get it out of my mouth."

Nelly recalls an incident during her stay at the health centre as one of the few "light" moments during the war. Parents were invited to see how their children were improving and to hear them sing. But the Germans, aware that they would get no sound from Nelly, did their best to

"hide" her in the very last row. She found this funny.

"We got good food and I gained a lot of weight. They were good to me. I was not good to them."

#### Desperate Trek

A friend, Berber Leipoldt, who was 16 or 17, walked about 300 kilometres to search for food. Her home-made sandals were in terrible condition. But she made it to Putten in Gelderland Province. She found food. But by the time she got back – some was stolen and she ate some – there was none left. (Berber survived the war; she now lives in New Zealand.)

*Nelly is shown in the front row with a parachute group. She was champion parachutist in Holland in 1958.*



*The day the Canadians marched into Amsterdam in early May, 1945, is a life-long memory for Nelly Lorenz. Fifty years later you can hear the emotion in her voice when she describes the scene.*

*"We knew the Canadians were coming. The streets were lined with thousands of people – shouting and crying. I'm not a cry baby but I certainly was crying that day. It was much more emotional than when the Queen returned from exile a little earlier."*

"We cooked on a 'stove' – a metal grill – measuring about five inches square. There was no electricity. We burned paper or picked up slivers of wood from trees – if there were any trees left."

People sneaked out after the 8 p.m. curfew in total darkness to cut down trees for wood. Any trees in Amsterdam today were planted after the war, Nelly says.

Towards the end of the war conditions became truly desperate. There had been no electricity for years; no coal or gas; no way to heat a home or cook. The only way people could get shoes was to make them from a piece of wood. Two or three strips of cloth held the wooden sole to the foot.

#### **Bread at Last**

In the last few months of fighting the Swedes were given permission to drop food packages at Amsterdam.

Nelly took off school to watch the drops at Schipol airport.

"I ran onto the field hoping to get some of the food. I didn't get any. But later we got some white bread as part of the general distribution. It was wonderful to get white bread after such a long time without any."

People were supposed to have surrendered their radios along with gold, silver and jewelry. But many people didn't, Nelly says.

"You wouldn't tell anybody you had gold in the house. There were always people who were trying to get in a good light with the Germans. Everybody was hungry.

"Those who had radios were afraid, and rightly so. You just did some little thing and they shot you. Or you went to a concentration camp."

People spread the news by word of mouth. Often the news came from radio broadcasts made by the Queen of Holland, who lived in exile in London throughout the war.

Nelly recalls the deep anti-German feeling of the Dutch people.

"We stuck together. Anything we could do against them, we did.

"As a child I did a lot of ball-playing; I could throw quite well. One day some Germans were walking by. I picked up some clay and threw it like a snowball. I yelled 'klik' 'klik' as it hit a helmet. I was laughing my head off.

"They ran after me. I climbed a fence but they were faster than I was. They took me to the police station next to where I lived. My father had to come to pick me up."

#### **Terrible Memory**

One of her most vivid memories was the shooting of at least five young men in a downtown square, Wetering Schans plantsoen. The area was roped off; Nelly was standing just behind the rope.

"These young guys were all standing up. Then 'tuk, tuk, tuk' and they were all falling down."

Later people brought a tremendous number of flowers to the square in memory of those shot. (People still place flowers there on the anniversary of the shootings.)

Nelly witnessed the arrest, or roundup, of Jews. Some of her Jewish friends disappeared; a few survived almost miraculously.

"My father, mother and I were walking one Sunday in Jeker Straat, a middle class neighbourhood with many Jewish families. Suddenly vans appeared; Germans with guns jumped out. People were pushed into houses.

"The Jewish families were picked up one by one. They were allowed only one bag; there was no time to pack anything.

"The Jewish families walked to a streetcar that was waiting for them. They were singing and seemed unconcerned. They didn't know where they were going. We had no idea."

But, Nelly says, it was hard for the Germans to move the Jewish families out of Amsterdam because of the Dutch people's refusal to operate the trains and the shortage of gasoline.

"I had a Jewish girlfriend who was picked up. The family ran a second hand store. I've never seen her again.

"A large part of the city had Jewish residents. As far as I know none of them came back."

#### **Incredible Escape**

After coming to Canada Nelly met Jettie Fuchs who reported a tragic experience.

Her middle class parents, through the underground, arranged a place for their two daughters the night before they planned their own escape. The parents were taken away that very night; they never came back.

"Jettie, who was 12 or 13, lived in a basement. She couldn't come upstairs because the people were afraid. If the Germans found out they were hiding a Jewish person the whole family would be shot.

"Jettie had no one to talk to, no one to play with.

"One night she heard the people upstairs talking about her. They were saying it was getting too dangerous to keep Jettie and that they would give her up.

"Jettie escaped that same night. She had been given

some addresses and made her way to one of them. At war's end she was sheltered by the Red Cross."

Later she came to Canada and married Leo Fuchs, another Jewish immigrant. They moved to Israel for several years but returned to this country to raise a son and a daughter. Jettie and Leo now live in Peterborough.

#### **Retribution**

Nelly will never forget how the people of Amsterdam treated Dutch women who had been friendly with German soldiers. Nelly says the women had got extra food from the Germans; the Dutch people considered them whores.

"These people were terrible in our eyes."

After the war they were picked up by the underground. They were tied in chairs in the middle of the street. Their head were shaved and painted red while onlookers screamed, "Yeah, yeah. Beautiful."

"I saw many of them who went through that process. To me it was inhumane," Nelly says.

Not long before the armistice an underground newspaper Het Parool – in fact a single sheet of paper – appeared in Nelly's high school. Nelly was fascinated. She wanted to join the underground but no one could give her information.

"My mother was terrified. She would say: 'Don't bring that (paper) home. I don't want it in the house.' She knew she would get shot if anyone would find it."

Although Nelly didn't join the underground she did find adventure soon after the war.

The trains started to run immediately after the armistice and people started to be happy. There was a future again, Nelly says. But there were no new homes and food

*Nelly's husband at signal equipment.*





remained on coupons, although meals took on a bit more variety.

#### Off to Sea

The Dutch Navy had recently opened its active ranks to women; Nelly was among the early volunteers.

The Navy took Nelly to Indonesia which was fighting for independence from the Dutch empire. She marvelled at how spacious the country seemed.

While serving in the Navy Nelly met Carolus Vandenhoeck and married him in 1951. Carolus died of a heart attack in 1953.

Soon she wanted to leave Holland, which now seemed so small and crowded.

"I wanted to go to a country where there was lots of space. I chose Canada."

A few months after she came here Nelly was working for Canadian National Telegraph in what many of us consider crowded, downtown Toronto. She had a room in the Gerrard/Sherbourne district.

"My taxi driver said 'This is a bad neighborhood.' Little did I know what he meant.

"I was walking to the streetcar next morning. Cars kept stopping next to me, and I thought, 'Things are strange in Canada but so friendly.'"

*Wartime photo at camp where Nelly spent six weeks because she was underweight. Camp staff, all Germans except 4th from left Fraulein Tony, a Dutch Nazi.*



At work the other women explained that the friendly drivers were looking for prostitutes. Nelly lost no time in moving to a different neighbourhood.

*Cemetery of Dutch war dead  
Soerabaja, Indonesia.*



## Join the Air Force and see the world



Ontario airmen stationed at Imphal, India, display captured Japanese ceremonial sword, flag and helmet. Lyle Dales is in the centre. Lyle's great-grandfather was the first of the Dales to farm in the Lowville area.

the Milton pair, the officials confided that Canada had declared war. That was that.

The next year Lyle and Bill Hill approached the RCAF in Toronto, insisting on air crew training. That delayed their enlistment until 1941 at Hamilton.

Lyle became a Wireless Air Gunner (WAG) assigned after training to 149 RCAF Coastal Command Squadron to patrol the west coast. He even took to slit trenches following a brief Japanese shelling of Vancouver Island, the only wartime shelling of Canadian territory.

Later he served in northern British Columbia and Alaska.

When he had been away for two years he asked for leave. The best the Commanding Officer could offer was nine days. Lyle explained that it would take exactly nine

**T**HE WAR PREVENTED Lyle Dales from seeing the World's Fair in 1939. But in the six years afterwards it sent him to Alaska, to Burma and to many postings in between.

In early September, 1939 Lyle and his cousin headed south excited about a visit to the Fair in New York City. Border officials at Niagara Falls killed the excitement: they refused the tourists permission to enter the U.S.

After lengthy protests by

*The war took Lyle Dales from Alaska to the jungles of southeast Asia.*

days to get to Milton and back by train. The kindly C.O. said he might "overlook" a few days' delay in getting back.

Lyle sat up all the way home, spent three days with his family, and had to sit up five more nights returning west. By then he was one exhausted airman.

Later came stints in England and Scotland with Coastal and Transport Commands and promotion to Flying Officer.

In 1944 he joined 194 RAF Squadron in India. From a base in Assam, the squadron supported Allied armies in driving the Japanese from mainland Asia. Their tasks included dropping troops, ammunition and supplies, towing gliders and flying out prisoners.

He later moved to Akyab, Burma on a similar assignment. Keeping dry in tents was a challenge: during the monsoon rainfall could amount to 14 inches a day.

Lyle took part in scores of supply missions: 38 drops and almost 200 landings. Sometimes his aircraft arrived at the target area before the Allies had taken over. This happened, he explains, when the Allies would surrender an area at night – the Japanese were "terrific night-fighters" – only to reclaim it in the morning. Lyle's aircraft would circle until the Allies were in control.

The war against Japan ended in August. But it was five months before Lyle got back to Canada. That included a month's delay in Bombay and a 25-day sea voyage through the Suez Canal to Liverpool.

After another month in England he boarded the *Queen Elizabeth*, arriving at his Milton home on Christmas eve, 1945. He was discharged the following month.

## *Pilots' order at Dieppe – cover our ships don't look for trouble*



**Ken Marshall**

*Ken Marshall's great-grandfather settled in Halton (Lower Base Line) more than 150 years ago.*

**K**EN MARSHALL WAS STUDYING at the Guelph Agricultural College where he was training with the Canadian Officers' Training Corps. Just before Christmas, the trainees were to run across a ploughed field with six inches of wet snow on it. He decided the Air Force would be better and was accepted for aircrew training and enlisted in Hamilton, January 6, 1941. He was 22.

After a brief stay at the Toronto Manning Depot – the Coliseum building in the Canadian National Exhibition grounds – he was off to Picton for basic training, then guard duty at Fingal where he escaped reprimand for an incident during training.

"On the airfield I saw a button on a pole; I was curious, so I pushed it. A few seconds later a car rushed up. The commanding officer jumped out. 'Where's the fire?' he shouted." Ken didn't know a thing about it.

Several weeks later he was in Victoriaville, Quebec working up to flight training.

"We got on well with the French-speaking people in the town for quite a while. But then one of the local girls got in a condition she shouldn't have been. And a priest advised people to stay away from us. At least, that's what we heard after we left."

Ken's most vivid memory of his elementary flying days? On the train trip to Mount Hope he fell asleep. Someone blew smoke up his nose.

"Boy that was painful – I didn't smoke in those days."

### **Bad Landing**

Ken took training on the *Fleet Finch Mark II*, an open-cockpit bi-plane. On his first solo flight he landed cross-

*Ken was flying a Spitfire over Dieppe that fateful August day but he didn't see it.*

wind, a dangerous mistake. And the chief flying instructor minced no words in telling him so.

"There was no excuse for it. It was a dirt field, no runways, so I had complete freedom to choose my landing approach."

After training on Harvards at Dunnville, Ont., Ken received his wings August 20, 1941.

"As far as I know I was the first person from Milton to receive pilot's wings. I am pretty proud of that."

He headed overseas as a Pilot Officer.

Ken remembers the Atlantic crossing almost as a luxury cruise. He was one of 14 Air Force officers who dined at the captain's table. The only unpleasant memory was having to wash in salt water.

The 41-ship convoy met no enemy submarines.

In Britain Ken was into training again, this time on Spitfires, the outstanding British fighter aircraft. He was assigned afterwards to RCAF squadron 416 and later 403, stationed near London.

Often his squadrons did sweeps off the French coast. The idea, Ken recalls, was to induce enemy fighters into battle. They were usually reluctant.

### **Lost Comrades**

But sometimes the Germans struck hard. Ken escaped injury but twice his aircraft was shot up, once by flak and once by cannon and machine-gun fire.

The squadron's heaviest losses came while Ken was on a 48-hour leave. Six pilots were lost – two killed and four taken prisoner.

Following that disaster the squadron re-grouped and

was stationed near Ipswich. Part of their job was escorting ships from Newcastle to London.

Compared to their previous adventures it seemed dull. To break the monotony Ken and his mates decided to "roll off the top." This meant flying upside down in a downward loop until the plane was a few feet from the water. This continued until one unlucky pilot flew so low that his propeller hit the water and shattered. The pilot got the plane home but got no merit marks – he was grounded. He later was shot down.

The tragic Dieppe raid, August 19, 1942, is another of Ken's memories. He was then at Manston near Canterbury.

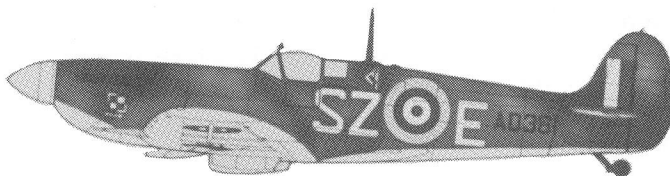
"In our briefing the day before, it sounded as if we would be lucky to get out alive."

Ken's two sorties fortunately were less grim. "There was so much smoke and dust we couldn't see a thing. We had strict orders to provide cover for our ships and not to go looking for German fighters."

Nevertheless, his squadron lost two pilots. One was Ed Gardiner, Ken's roommate and son of James G. Gardiner, former Saskatchewan premier and federal Minister of Agriculture, 1935-1957.

During the Dieppe action, of course, Ken had no idea Canadian troops were suffering such terrible losses.

"I have thought a lot about Dieppe. We learned a lot there. The losses were heavy but the lessons learned may have saved many more lives on D-Day."



*A Spitfire*

were firing camera-guns.

About this time Ken recalls perhaps his most embarrassing moment of the war.

"After dining with the commanding officer of the bomber squadron we were taxiing for take-off. The wheels of my *Spitfire* got stuck in ruts in the sod made by much-wider bomber wheels. The first thing I knew the plane tilted over, nose to the ground. No damage was done. But it was embarrassing to have to climb out over the nose."

He was far from the only one to be

### Camera Targets

A quite different experience came when Ken's squadron co-operated in the training of bomber crews. The Spitfires made mock attacks to provide targets for the bomber gunners who

*Major Edith R. Dick, (left)  
Matron of No. 10 Canadian  
General Hospital with a friend  
and brother-in-law Ken  
Marshall. April 1943.*







2nd Lieut. William Foster, May 1992, after graduation from Royal Military College, Kingston, is shown with grandparents Ken and Billie Marshall.

found in an unlikely position. Ken recalls going to a Christmas party with his squadron pals. When they went to the mess for a drink there was no sign of the barman. A little detective work solved the matter: the barman was stretched out behind the bar dead drunk.

Ken at one stage helped train pilots of the British Fleet Air Arm. The idea was to adapt *Spitfires* to fly from the decks of Navy ships.

"Some of the pilots involved had served on the run to Murmansk," Ken says. "I wondered what advice a young pilot like me could give to such experienced fliers."

#### Passage to India

Following 26 months in the U.K. Ken was posted to India. "We were the first convoy through the Mediterranean after the Allies had chased the Germans out of North Africa."

He was stationed in the remote Imphal Valley near the border with Burma. One night a Japanese raiding party – dressed in Allied uniforms – uttered the right password to security and blew up three or four *Hurricane* fighters.

"At the time we considered it a huge joke. Of course, we didn't have to worry, our tents were at the opposite end of the field."

At the end of his Indian service Ken sailed from Bombay in December, 1944.

"We spent Christmas eve in a pup tent at Ismalia. We had three blankets but was it ever cold!"

By New Year's eve they were berthed in the harbour at Gibraltar. There was no shore leave and no party. A few days later Ken landed in Liverpool.

He sailed for home on the *Nieuw Amsterdam* – the for-

mer vessel, not today's ship of the same name.

When he arrived in Canada Ken declined an opportunity to serve at Hagersville and left the service in April, 1945. Discharged in Toronto, he hitchhiked home to Milton.

*Ken Marshall at Catterick Station, Yorkshire, 1942. The aircraft is a Spitfire fighter, which Ken flew in operations in the U.K. and India.*

Ken never did return to university. He used his wartime grants to buy a farm next to his father's and remained there 30 years. The Steeles Avenue overpass of Highway 401 marks the middle of one of Ken's former fields.



## Many ships torpedoed off our east coast



**Harvey Leggo**

*The Leggos came here from Oakville more than 35 years ago; they wanted to bring up their family in a small town and the house prices were friendly.*

**H**ARVEY LEGGO HAD THE UNUSUAL experience of crossing the Atlantic both as a merchant seaman and a soldier.

Harvey was born near Corner Brook, Newfoundland, a seaport and long-time site of the Bowater paper plant. In 1941 when he turned 17 he joined the company's sea-going operations as a galley boy.

For the next three years he made scores of trips, mostly in convoys but some "independently" (without escort). These included routes to New York, Philadelphia, Miami and Quebec City as well as trans-Atlantic convoys.

No matter where crews sailed in the early years of the war they faced great danger. In September, 1942, Harvey's convoy of 22 ships lost four vessels in two days. They were enroute to Quebec City from Nova Scotia. All were torpedoed off the Gaspé coast.

Harvey witnessed one of the sinkings – within sight of Cap-des-Rosiers – just after noon while hanging clothes on deck.

He was fortunate to escape torpedoing: four of the seven Bowater vessels were lost and Harvey had served aboard two of them. Three of his friends died.

Perhaps Harvey's narrowest escape came in 1944 after the danger of crossing the Atlantic had been greatly reduced. He was aboard a ship docked at London when a German buzz bomb struck a nearby merchant vessel, killing a number of the crew.

Harvey remembers many terrible winter storms on the North Atlantic. A "slow" crossing took up to 14 days; "fast" convoys made the trip in about eight days.

Another unpleasant memory: two days shovelling coal

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*He served through the worst times but  
his closest call came later.*

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below deck, filling in for a crew mate who "missed" the convoy. He found it hot, dirty and dusty and couldn't wait to get to his regular work on deck.

All sea travel – even "independent" trips – were controlled by the British Admiralty. Routes, chosen for safety, often zig-zagged a lot – much to the annoyance of some captains.

Harvey left the merchant navy in late 1944 to take a holiday with his family in Toronto. A few months later he joined the infantry. He didn't have to manhandle coal but he remembers that when a huge snowstorm shut down traffic he and other trainees had to shovel off the railway tracks near Toronto.

Soon after the war Harvey was assigned to guarding war prisoners. He was sent to various camps in Ontario and later helped escort hundreds of prisoners on their return to Europe.

Not long afterwards Harvey was a civilian again. Fifty years later he received four wartime medals from Ottawa.



*Harvey Leggo, sisters Jessie and Beth and brother Murray, who was in the merchant navy.*

# How to dodge 100 bullets and end up in Buckingham Palace



**Bruce C. MacNab**  
*in helmet worn on operations. Bruce MacNab traces his district roots to the early 1800s.*

**B**RUCE MACNAB BELIEVES he was the first Miltonian to see action in the Second World War, and he saw plenty of it. He was also one of the comparatively few servicemen anywhere to win the Distinguished Flying Medal, a decoration awarded to non-commissioned airmen.

He was training at Hamilton Normal School to be a public school teacher when he joined the Royal Canadian Air Force. Following an observer's course at Malton (now the Toronto International Airport), a wireless course in Montreal and gunnery training at Jarvis, Ont., he graduated as a wireless operator/air gunner.

A sergeant, he was now ready for the shooting war. He didn't have to wait long to witness the horror of battle.

With some 200 other airmen he crowded into the *Aurania*, an armed merchant cruiser, for the trip to England. The vessel sailed from Halifax May 10, 1941. The 13,000-ton ship was about 600 feet long and armed with eight six-inch guns and two three-inch, high-angle anti-aircraft guns.

With top speed of 17 knots it couldn't manoeuvre quickly enough to escape submarines. But, Bruce noted, the vessel had 30,000 barrels of compressed air in the holds.

"If it were torpedoed it would take at least two hours to sink and that's a consolation," he reported.

"There were approximately 24 ships, I think, in the convoy. As we steamed out there was a battleship and we were told it was going to be our escort across the Atlantic. We had a submarine, the sister ship to the *Thetis* that was sunk in the channel prior to the war. It was our accompaniment also.

*Bruce lived through two hectic tours in war's darkest days but he wanted more.*

"Well, the battleship we never did see again because it was called out to the *Hood/Bismarck* episode when the *Bismarck* escaped out into the ocean. The submarine developed engine trouble the day before our action took place and had to go back to England on the surface."

Three days out of Halifax a German submarine struck. Walking on the deck late at night, Bruce and a fellow airman saw strange lights on the horizon. They thought little of it.

## Distress Signals

Minutes later a sailor reported gunfire to the starboard. Bruce and his pals rushed on deck. All they could see were distress signals. These were from a torpedoed freighter on the outer edge of the convoy.

When nothing more happened Bruce went to bed, about 1 a.m. Eight hours later Ted Hilmer, an Oakville friend, shook Bruce awake: "Things are about to happen."

Right then Bruce heard a muffled explosion.

"I jumped up and ran about ten steps to a porthole," Bruce wrote. "A freighter had been torpedoed off our port side. All that was left of the wreckage was some floating airplane fuselages. The ship had been carrying explosives, too. It sank in less than a minute; someone said 47 seconds.

"Meanwhile a freighter carrying 10,000 tons of benzene moved up close to the site of the sinking. It, too, was torpedoed. It blew up and became a raging mass of flames.

"All the rest of the Air Force guys were herded down to the mess deck. But since I wasn't dressed I stayed up. I made up my mind not to go down anyway for that would be no place to be caught if we were hit."

Bruce rushed back to the porthole, pulling on his



clothes as he went. The vessel was about 200 yards away. Flames shot up at least 200 feet from clouds of black smoke.

"Even through the glass porthole you could feel the heat and smell the smoke," Bruce reported.

#### Fiery Death

Three men were swimming; three others drifted on a raft. Burning oil and smoke just rolled over them. Bruce could hear them screaming for help. No one could help them.

Bruce found out that three torpedoes had been fired at the *Aurania*. They missed when the captain ordered full speed astern.

Following the explosion the convoy scattered. Some ships dropped smoke screens.

Bruce spotted the periscope of the submarine that had sunk the ships; it was about 300 yards away. Just as the *Aurania's* guns were being trained on the submarine another convoy ship sailed into the line of fire. No shots were possible.

Moments later the *Aurania* shuddered. It had smashed into a submarine. Two depth charges destroyed the sub. Radio signals brought destroyers to the scene; they destroyed three more submarines.

In the whole action, Bruce reported, seven submarines destroyed nine or ten of the 28 ships.

Bruce noted that many were scared during the action. But for some it was business as usual. The ship's doctor read letters throughout the episode; a serviceman kept on writing.

The *Aurania* headed for Reykjavik, Iceland. From there it returned to Halifax where a sailor mailed Bruce's account. It was the only one of the letters to his close friend, Marion Gastle, that arrived uncensored. (A copy is part of the archives of the Milton Historical Society.)

Bruce learned that before the submarine attack, the *Aurania* had escorted convoys for 17 months without incident. The sinkings took place 100 miles southeast of Cape Farewell, Greenland, some hundreds of miles farther west than submarines had ever been reported.

*A scene at sea as a U-Boat is surrounded by warships.*





*A Wellington that had to land wheels up on returning from an operational flight in north Africa, during the spring of 1942 on the Libyan Desert.*



After the action the *Aurania* sailed so far north it reached the zone of 24-hour daylight.

At the time the public heard no details of the events Bruce describes. But people did hear about the sinking of the British battleship *Hood*. That happened while Bruce was at sea, just to the east of the sinkings witnessed by Bruce.

#### **Grim Toll**

Of the more than 1,400 men on the *Hood* only three survived. They were taken to England in the same ship that carried the Canadian airmen. At Reykjavik Bruce saw the

survivors board the vessel: one, although bandaged, walked on; two were carried on stretchers.

Bruce was with a group of sailors on the mess deck when a BBC newscast reported the sinking of the *Hood*.

"The poor British sailors were just thunderstruck. They never thought it possible that the *Hood* could be sunk. But it was a lucky shot that went down into the magazine and blew the ship up."

(The *Hood* was sunk by the new German battleship *Bismarck* on her first foray into the Atlantic. A few days later British ships and planes tracked down the *Bismarck* and sank her.)

Arriving in Britain Bruce was stationed briefly near Stratford-on-Avon for operational training before being posted to 405 Squadron, the first RCAF squadron in the United Kingdom. It was a *Wellington* squadron; Bruce made all 50 of his operations in this type of aircraft, which was the mainstay of the Allied bomber fleet. (During the war the Allies built more than 11,000 *Wellingtons*, far more than any other bomber.)

#### **Desert Bound**

While in England Bruce made two bombing runs over Germany - one to Stettin, the other to Hamburg. Then he joined 148 Squadron, which was sent to the Middle East to relieve the bombing pressure on Allied troops in the western desert (North Africa). This was the period when the Axis forces were at their strongest.

For a time Bruce's squadron operated from advance landing grounds in North Africa, bombing General Rommel's supply lines. They were supposed to stay five or six days there before being relieved. In fact, they were left for up to two months at a time.

Eventually the German army pushed the Allied forces far to the east. The advance landing grounds, of course, had to be abandoned. It was back to the "regular" base. Bruce's aircraft was the last to leave the advance area.

"We brought all the squadron's records with us; we had the bomb bays full. Sixteen guys were aboard. I was the last to board and had to act as second pilot because that was the only spot left empty."

Back at Suez the job remained the same – hitting the enemy's supply lines. But getting there and back now meant up to eleven hours in the air.

"In the desert you didn't fly in formation. At night every kite was on its own. You had your own target – you went on it by yourself so the concentration of flak was right there. We bombed from about 8,000 feet. (Over Germany bombers flew at 15 to 20,000 feet.)"

The bomber was in the target area for about 15 minutes. "If you didn't get a good bombing run the first time then you went around and came in again."

#### **Delivering Milk**

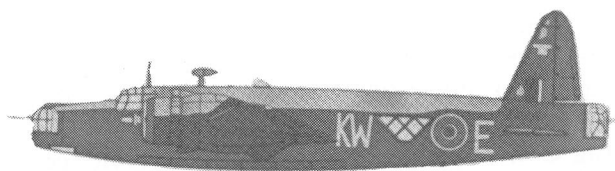
Bengasi was a favourite target because it was the main shipping centre for the German forces in the Mediterranean area. Allied airmen often called it "the milk run."

Bruce's fighting in the Middle East was crowded into a few hectic months in 1942. He made 48 flights – 13 of them in June – and survived both tours of duty unscratched. That was extremely lucky: at that stage of the war about seven airmen in 100 survived one tour of operations.

After one flight his crew counted more than 100 shrapnel holes in the aircraft. No one was hurt. And when the squadron lost all ten of its aircraft in three days, his crew came through unscathed.

That was during the memorable battle for Malta.

"In April we were sent up there – ten aircraft and 20 crews. We were supposed to operate three times each night. It was only 80 miles from our airdrome to Comiso in Sicily, where the Germans had a very, very large air force. More than 1,300 German planes bombed Malta every day, from just before dawn till after dark."



*A Wellington bomber*

For Bruce and his crew the Germans meant double trouble – both at home base and over the target area. At the Sicily end the anti-aircraft fire was massive.

"They had a box barrage up and you had to go through it – flak all over the place." This was the action that left more than 100 holes in the aircraft.

"The cabin was full of cordite fumes. You could run your finger down your log sheet and leave a white line though the cordite specks."

When they arrived home it was just as bad.

#### **Unwary Pilot**

"Gerry generally had two or three aircraft circling around waiting for kites to come in. We had just nicely touched down and coasted to a halt when Gerry laid a stock of bombs down the runway and shook the aircraft. One landed behind, and one ahead. No damage done.

"We ran for shelter. I was running beside skipper

## **Someone Goofed**

*It didn't happen often but someone pulled a boner when Mr. and Mrs. Gordon MacNab received official word that their son Bruce was missing.*

*The word came shortly after Bruce was transferred from Britain to the Middle East. But Bruce arrived safe in Egypt, although three of the nine planes were lost on the flight.*

*"They must have mistaken our plane for one of those lost," Bruce now says.*

*Bruce went on to engage in many hazardous air operations in North Africa and to win the Distinguished Flying Medal.*



Bruce MacNab, left, and "Squibs" Thorogood on a street in Tel Aviv December 1941.

Johnny Clark, chatting at the same time. Then I couldn't hear him any more. I went back and found him – he had fallen off the runway into a bomb crater. He was embarrassed but otherwise O.K.

"Shortly afterwards we returned to the aircraft to gather our gear. Another stick of bombs. Another miss. We hurried up the runway again – and Johnny fell into the same crater. This time we left him to climb out by himself."

That was the one light moment in a desperate fight. There were two aircraft (of the original 10) to go on the second operation that night. One of these was shot down. The Wing Commander was going to take the last plane out but the Group Captain refused him permission. Next day the aircraft was destroyed on the ground.

But Bruce's squadron had done damage, too: aerial photographs of the base in Sicily showed 14 German aircraft destroyed.

Because of their heroic defense of their island the people of Malta were awarded the George Cross.

More than 50 years later Bruce and other servicemen who took part in that epic Mediterranean battle (1939-42) received a silver commemorative medal.

Following the desperate Malta fighting Bruce took a roundabout route back to Britain. (The Germans controlled the Mediterranean sea lanes.) He sailed through the Red

Sea and down the African coast to Durban where he waited five weeks for another ship to Capetown.

"We had four days at Capetown, then 35 days up the west coast of Africa, back through the Bay of Biscay and so forth, to Greenoch, the seaport of Glasgow."

#### Off the Hot Seat

His Distinguished Flying Medal, of course, was presented during the war. In March 1943 Bruce drove from Surrey to London for the investiture in Buckingham Palace. His driver was "Uncle" Tommy, a generous Londoner who opened his home to more than 20 servicemen during the war.

Tommy dropped Bruce off at the Palace and went on to work. Tommy's wife and daughter took their seats in the auditorium. Bruce was ushered into a huge room where about 150 service people were waiting for their decorations.

Bruce made his way to a radiator and sat on it. A Commissionaire appeared: "Excuse me, Sir, we do not sit on radiators here."

Bruce says the investiture by King George VI was "quite awe-inspiring."

Following is the citation for the Distinguished Flying Medal won by Flight Sergeant Bruce Campbell MacNab:

"This airman, a graduate of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, has participated as a wireless operator/air gunner in numerous operations. He has been in actions against targets in Germany, the western desert, Greece, Crete and Sicily and since May, 1942 has acted as signals leader in the squadron. His determination and devotion to duty have at all times been outstanding and an example to others.

"Flight Sergeant MacNab's home is in Milton, Ontario."

### Scary Drops

"Devotion to duty" took many forms. Bruce remembers every detail of flare-dropping in the desert.

"We had to take a *Wellington* that was used for training paratroopers. You stepped over the main spar and down two feet to get to the tail of the fuselage. This hole was cut right in the whole width of the aircraft, just over the main spar where you stepped down.

"It was up to the wireless operator – I was the Joe guy – to drop these flares. We had 50 of them on board, 45 pounds each."

It was strenuous work and there was no oxygen supply because the squadron had no equipment to administer it.

"We were flying fairly low that night, between five and six thousand feet, dropping flares so that the other bombers could come in over top. A squadron of American B-24s was at 20 or 21 thousand feet."



The "V" for Victory Wellington Bomber that Bruce flew in on many trips. Here it's in the Libyan Desert in the spring of 1942.

Bruce couldn't wear his parachute – it was too bulky. The only safety factor was a small board at the edge of the "hole."

"So there I was, climbing over this main spar, stepping down over this hole with a 45-pound flare, shoving it into the flare chute. All this time the pilot was taking evasive action because they really had us pinned down with flak fire. You could see the old bullets coming up without any trouble. Then once the flare was in place I'd get on the intercom, 'OK, steady.' So he would straighten up and I would kick the flare out and start back for another. We did that 50 times. We didn't get hit and I didn't drop through the damn hole."

### Handle With Care

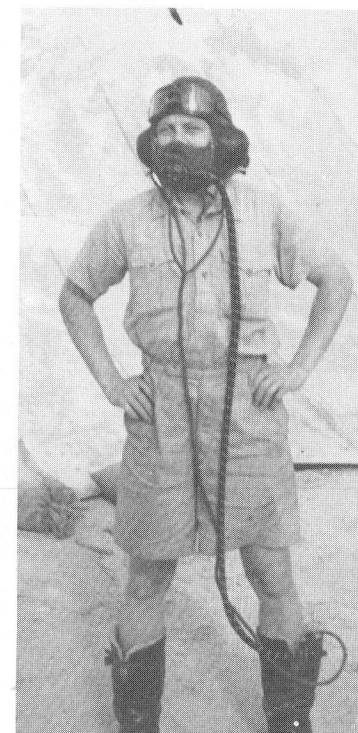
Ground activity sometimes required a lot of "devotion to duty," too. One incident at an advance landing area in the western desert was pretty nerve-wracking.

"We had 200 anti-personnel bombs aboard – 4,000 pounds of them. I was sitting in the aircraft looking after it while the rest were in at supper prior to take-off.

"Gerry came down with an ME 110 and knocked out about three aircraft. Everything went up in flames. Ops were cancelled. We had to get out of there. But we couldn't risk a landing with these bombs on. They were too sensitive.

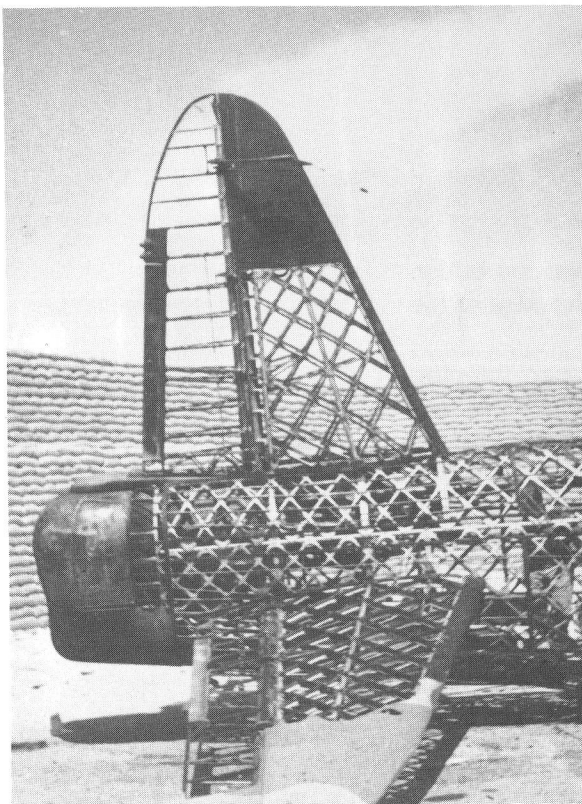
"We pulled the aircraft alongside the bomb armoury. By floodlight we had to hand pick every one of those 200 bombs and pass them in a relay chain and finally stack them in the armoury.

"This was a shaky do because all you had to do was drop them two inches and they would go off. It would have meant the whole bunch would have gone off. The aircraft



Flying kit for summer flying is shown on Bruce as he poses beside his tent near the Suez Canal in the spring of 1942. A bush jacket completed the kit.





*The burned out tail section of a Wellington Bomber. It was the last of 10 bombers that 148 RAF Squadron flew to Malta to try to relieve the bombing raids. The first day five were lost, the second night four more and this on the third morning.*

would have exploded. You couldn't afford to be careless."

Bruce doesn't recall being afraid during this experience or at any time during the war.

"I don't think many of us ever experienced fear in the true sense of the word. We were apprehensive as to what might happen perhaps, but you knew the risks and you were taking them and there wasn't anything you could do about it. So you went ahead and did your job. Really fear was not a motivating factor – in my particular case, anyway."

While in Britain about this time, and later in Canada, Bruce took part as a guest speaker at war bond rallies.

#### Attentive Ladies

"In England I went to half a dozen factories to talk to the workers at noon over the p.a. system. Certainly all the ladies working in the factories were a

most attentive audience and appeared to enjoy everything we said and suggested to them."

One of the rallies he attended in Canada was in Milton. But it wasn't Bruce's turn to speak in his home town.

Bruce describes such appearances as "an interesting part of the Air Force career."

It must have been frustrating, too, because he wanted to be part of the active fighting. When his second tour ended in the Middle East he begged to stay on. Instead – as

he discovered from a dance partner, who worked in the records section – he was transferred to Penfield Ridge, New Brunswick.

"I didn't even know where Penfield Ridge was."

When he did get back to this country his main goal was to return overseas. He badgered everyone he could think of, including M.P. Hughes Cleaver of Burlington. Nothing helped. But his letter to the M.P. resulted in Bruce's assignment to pilot training.

Feeling as he did, Bruce couldn't help being upset by the attitude of some of the people in Canada.

#### War Profits

"I remember one local chap with whom I used to go to school and spend the night at his farm outside the town. After I was back home on the first leave he met me down town.

"His comment was: 'Bruce, the war can go on forever as far as I'm concerned. I've got all kinds of crops in the granary and lots of cows. The farm is almost paid for. It's never been so good.'"

That was the end of the friendship so far as Bruce was concerned.

Like many veterans Bruce is more likely to talk about the funny or off-beat incidents than about "blood and guts."

He remembers Joe Kehoe, a raw-boned giant from Argentina. He was a front gunner and a good one. But he was having difficulties with Warrant Officer Streeter whom Bruce described as a "disciplinarian type."

"Somehow or other Joe got in wrong with Streeter and Streeter was trying to make Joe toe the mark.

"Joe got into the beer one night in the mess. Joe came in with his .45 revolver from his days in Argentina.

"He put it on the table in front of him with his beer: 'All right, now where's Streeter?'"

"Luckily a couple of Streeter's friends got to him and told him he had better not come to the tent because Joe was laying for him. I don't know what would have happened if Streeter had walked in. I think Joe would have taken a pot shot at him."

Bruce recalled another incident when a threatened disaster was averted. This happened, or didn't happen, during the rainy season when lakes form in the desert.

#### Red Faces

A shot-up plane had to land in one of these lakes. The crew all climbed onto the wings of the aircraft, wondering what to do. They feared the aircraft would sink at any moment.

Finally dawn came and through the mist they could see friendly troops. The soldiers urged them to come ashore but the airmen thought the risk was too great. Eventually the "character" of the crew bravely decided to swim ashore for rescue boats. He jumped in. To everyone's embarrassment he found the water four-feet deep.

A Scottish front gunner, Henry "Hank" McCabe, starred in two incredible happenings. The first came during training, the "circuits and bumps," when the crew familiarized themselves with the *Wellington*.

"Hank had on his full flying gear- the big leather coat and pants, boots, helmet and all. Instead of sitting in the turret - you never sat in the front turret on take-off or landing - he stretched out in the back and fell asleep.

"A rough landing jarred him awake. He realized his inter-com had come loose. He grabbed it and plugged it in.

"All he heard was 'out'. He immediately thought 'bail out.' He grabbed his parachute, slapped it on his chest, yanked open the door, jumped out, and pulled his chute - and skidded along the runway as the aircraft coasted to a stop. No damage done."

The other incident was in the air.

#### Distant Target

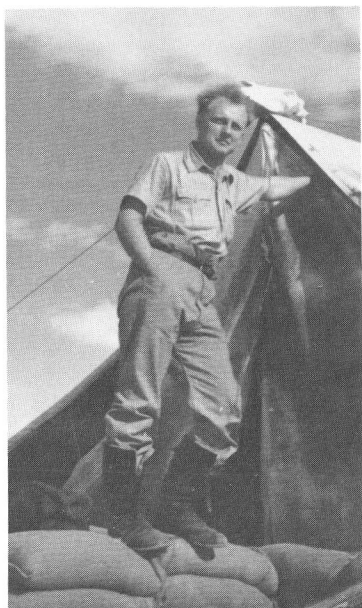
"Coming back from a desert operation Hank fell asleep in the front turret. Then something woke him up.

"At the time Gerry had a *Messerschmidt 110* with a searchlight. It was quite a bright light.

"Hank saw a bright light, shouted 'aircraft ahead' and

*An aircraft burning on the ground after being dive-bombed by a Ju87 Stuka. More than 1300 aircraft bombed Malta each day while Bruce was there.*





*Bruce stands in front of his tent near the Suez Canal. The tent was dug into the ground two feet and surrounded by sand bags. This was the spring of 1942.*

started firing at the brilliant Morning Star. That was always good for a laugh."

Bruce often thinks of his war experiences, especially of some of the airmen who did not survive.

He trained with Charles Edward Hilmer of Oakville – they were on 405 Squadron together. Bruce was posted away and Ted continued on.

"We left the Squadron in October. On the night of November 29-30th 1941 Ted went on a trip over Germany. He had the Wing Commander as a pilot and Bob Mather as Observer. Bob was in the first Observer's course with me.

"The aircraft did its bombing. Coming home they just disappeared over the North Sea. No trace was ever found of them.

"Ted certainly was a happy-go-lucky guy. His father, Charlie Hilmer, was a well-known coal merchant and a respected citizen of Oakville."

He remembers "Dave", an English air-gunner, thirtyish and almost too old for air crew. Dave had just received word of a new baby in England. He had one more trip to complete his operation. He was lost on that 30th trip.

Joe Kehoe, the Argentinian, died during the Malta battle. Joe was the airman who sat in the mess tent with his revolver on the table, waiting for a despised warrant officer.

#### Hard Losses

"We had been shot up on a trip and were talking about it in the mess. Joe went out on a second trip that night. They didn't come back.

"The only survivor was Flight Lieutenant Hayter, the pilot. He became a prisoner-of-war. Most of us thought that

the pilot likely bailed out and let the aircraft do what it could. We thought he was an obnoxious type. But he was a Flight Lieutenant and a pilot and, of course, what he said to the crew had to go.

"Another was Neil McDonald, the skipper who took over from John Clark out in the desert. I stayed on with Neil past my first tour of ops to finish up with him.

"Neil got to England, did a conversion to *Lancasters* and was shot down on his first trip."

Neil had been awarded the DFM at the same time as Bruce. But Bruce didn't know about the award until John Clark visited Neil's grave in Germany after the war.

Bob Graham of Moose Jaw helped Bruce celebrate the night of his investiture in London. They had lunch at the Savoy Hotel, including some pre-war German beer purloined from the basement for the occasion.

Next morning Bob took the train back to his squadron. Two days later he didn't come back from a mission.

Bob's brother, also a pilot, was killed later in the war.

"On our honeymoon after the armistice we dropped in at Moose Jaw to visit Bob's parents. That was a sad evening."

#### Few Left

Because he served during a period when Air Force casualties were so heavy, postwar squadron re-unions have been disappointing for Bruce.

"We were in 405 Squadron when it was first formed. Most of the survivors are from '44 or '45 when the losses were way down."

Bruce attended a re-union in Toronto where he didn't know a single person. He had the same experience at a get-

together in Halifax. As a result his association with veterans has been through personal friendships and attending local meetings of the Canadian Legion. Lorne Brisbane of Burlington – they met during pilot training – has been meeting Bruce a couple of times a year since 1945. Lorne has been coming alone since his wife died a few years ago.

Bruce has poignant memories of V-E Day, much different from the jubilant memories of the vast majority of service people.

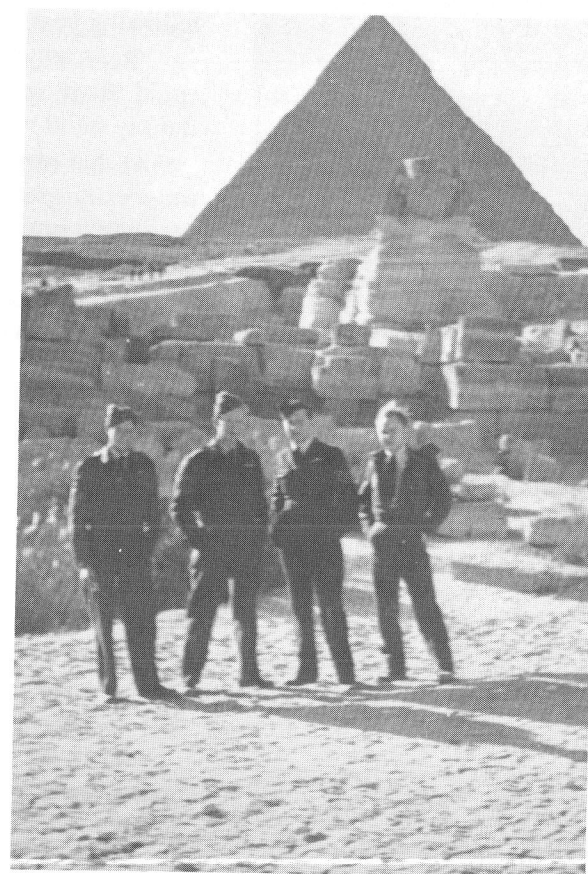
"Joe Byron and I were stationed in Toronto at the time. Joe was in the Middle East with us – another wireless operator/airgunner – and subsequently was best man at our wedding.

"We were out of the Air Force but were still wearing our uniforms. One of our friends, Andy Anderson, had been taking a pilot's course after completing operations. He was in Prince Edward Island.

"He was coming in on his cross-wind leg, to come in for a final approach. His port motor cut and, of course, he wasn't experienced enough as a pilot. So the ship just spiraled right down into the ground and he was killed.

"He was buried on V-E Day and Joe and I went to the funeral in Toronto. It was rather disconcerting with all those celebrations that were there. We had an unpleasant memory of that historic day."

*The Sphinx and pyramid in the background are shown in the winter of 1941-42 with Stanley Thorogood of England, Ken Elcoate of England, John Leauwin-Clark of Australia and Bruce C. MacNab of Milton in the foreground.*





# John found a friend fast when forced down on enemy soil



**John McTrach**

*John's family immigrated early in the century from the Ukraine and came to this area soon afterwards; spelling of the family name gradually evolved to suit Anglo-Saxon ears.*

**W**HEN JOHN MCTRACH WAS WORKING at the P. L. Robertson plant at the start of the war, his heart set on a pilot's wings, he never dreamed his high school French would come in so handy.

John enlisted in 1939 but was not called up until the following year.

"Even after I had signed up Peter Robertson told me he could 'fix it' so that I could continue working in the plant. But my mind was made up."

At that early stage John says the Air Force wanted only university graduates as pilots. John left school when he graduated from Milton High.

When the military adopted more realistic standards he put on the RCAF uniform. He took early training at Long Branch and went on to Elementary Flying School at Goderich.

He trained on the *Fleet Finch* aircraft. A turning point came when he was tested after 20 hours of solo flying.

## A Tough Marker

"The instructor marked you on take-off, landings, aerobatics and everything else. I didn't get enough points. I was out as a pilot."

John suspects that instructors were being especially critical at that time because the service had more than enough pilots. The urgent need was for navigators. And that was the option John chose.

Many months of training followed at air observer and bombing and gunnery schools; he trained at Trenton and at Portage-la-Prairie and nearby Macdonald, Manitoba. There

*He "undershot" England by a few minutes: spent eight months in France.*

were even special navigation courses at Rivers, Manitoba, in preparation for a flight overseas.

As things turned out he didn't need the specialized instruction - he got overseas by ship like most servicemen. But on their first attempt to board John and his group were repulsed by bedbugs and other filthy conditions. John learned the vessel had been used to bring prisoners-of-war to this country.

Shortly afterwards - following a Victory Bond tour of Nova Scotia - he was on his way to Britain in the *Queen Elizabeth*, the largest and fastest troopship. Others aboard were soldiers commanded by Major Conn Smythe, the bombastic builder of Maple Leaf Gardens, and long-time head of Toronto's National Hockey League team. He arrived in England early in 1942.

More training followed in the south of England, at Bournemouth and near Bristol. This included familiarization flights on *Anson* aircraft.

## Cold Times

Some of his sharpest memories of these months are of the miserable cold.

"We had every pine tree stripped down to make fires. It was so damp."

His training completed, he was posted to 76 Squadron, RAF. He flew on *Whitleys* before converting to the *Halifax* bomber.

"We went down to Brest (French submarine base) one night to throw propaganda leaflets out. That was the summer of 1942."

John took part in eight bombing raids over Germany. He was the only Canadian in the RAF crew. The pilot of the

four-engined Halifax crew was George Whitehead, an Englishman.

His final flight was on January 20, 1944 when the aircraft was badly shot up over Berlin.

Flak tore a huge hole in the nose of the plane. Just a few seconds after advising the pilot "bombs are gone", bomb aimer, Flying Officer H.D.G. Morris, was killed instantly. Wireless operator Sergeant Leonard Stokes suffered severe neck and head wounds. (He survived.)

In every aspect the situation was desperate. Pilot Whitehead described it in "See the Dawn Breaking" by Canadian author W. R. Chorley:

#### Bailing Out

"Our immediate problem was the complete loss of all navigational equipment; charts, protractors, log, flight plans – all sucked through the hole in the fuselage. All compasses were rendered unserviceable and an engine failed."

Icy winds blasted through the hole in the nose even though the body of the bomb aimer was placed to shut out the cold.

For John, as navigator, things could not have been much worse. John explained to author Chorley:

"We could keep nothing down unless it was tied. The aircraft kept wallowing about making my attempts at astro-navigation near impossible. So I had to rely on dead reckoning. As we flew near to the Ruhr I managed to get a fix on a diversionary raid. But we had to leave the main force (returning from Berlin) while still over Germany as we were in no shape to ditch if forced down on the long North Sea crossing."

Eventually the cloud cover broke and John got his first sight of land since leaving England. But nothing looked familiar.

It didn't matter because fuel was running out and both port engines were badly over-heated. The pilot ordered the crew to bail out.

All survived. And three – John, pilot Whitehead, and rear gunner, Sergeant "Tich" Compton, escaped capture.

The aircraft burned after the crash; the body of Flying Officer Morris later was recovered.

"When I bailed out the chute was swaying and I was afraid I was going to land in the flames (the burning aircraft). Then I landed on my rear in a garden. It was 11:30 at night.

*John McTrach's Halifax bomber gets a spirited send-off Oct. 22, 1943 at #76 Squadron (RAF) airfield, Yorkshire, as it takes off to bomb Kassel, Germany.*





*John McTrach, right front, with French neighbours. Some knew he was a downed Canadian airman hiding from the Germans, some didn't.*

### Who's a Friend?

"I hid my 'chute in the cabbages and started walking away from town. We had been warned that enemy patrols would be searching for us if we cracked up."

John walked up a winding road and soon saw lights. It turned out to be a large church. He lit a cigarette and kept out of sight in the church cemetery. He could see men coming and going and quickly concluded the church was an unlikely haven; Germans were billeted in the basement!

He walked a little farther before deciding to wait for daylight. Alerted by whistles he reached railway tracks and followed them to a station.

"I made a contact with the people living there – an elderly couple and their daughter. I stayed most of the night talking with them – and got a lot of good information.

"At daylight I went into the town (Liévin). Coal miners were getting ready for work. In one house I spotted two men and when one of them left I knocked on the door.

"I had quite a time convincing the miner I wasn't a German. I had ripped off badges and any identification from my uniform and then I didn't look much different from a German in battledress."

When he had been convinced the miner decided to take the day off. He arranged for John to spend the night with a family that had sheltered other Allied servicemen.

Next day underground members arrived with a bicycle and took John to the mayor's office.

### New Identity

"I was photographed and given false identity papers. They found me a place with an elderly couple in the moun-

tains. I stayed there about two weeks. Then I was moved to Bouilly-les-Mines where I remained until we got out of France."

John spent about eight months with the underground but he wasn't "hiding" all the time. The young Frenchmen would often invite him to take part in their outings.

"One night we went down a mine to get dynamite. The guys forced the guards to one side. They knew exactly where the explosives were. They didn't use the dynamite that night – it was put aside for some future date, probably for blowing a railway bridge or a culvert. A lot of that was going on. I didn't actually handle the dynamite – I was just an observer."

Another time John and a young girl – a member of the family where he was hiding – bicycled to the chateau of a French colonel.

"I talked with him quite a while. He was a veteran of the First World War. Apparently he dealt with the French and with the Germans to keep things onside pretty well." (By this time the Germans had occupied France for about four years.)

John also visited his crew mate "Tich" Compton who was being sheltered by the underground in the Pas-de-Calais region. This is in the northernmost part of France: John's town was about 40 kilometres from the Belgian border and about 70 from the Strait of Dover. (A rear gunner, "Tich" served a second tour with the RAF after reaching England.)

### Language Lessons

John was often called on as an interpreter – it didn't take him long to become fluent in French. He was a useful

go-between when downed airmen made contact with the underground.

Even when he was at "home" life was far from dull. In the hospital grounds just below his shelter he could see buzz bombs being launched against London. He also watched Allied planes attacking the buzz bomb sites. More than once he watched American airmen parachuting from their shot-up B-17 daylight bombers.

His favourite memory is of Mustang pilots attacking railway locomotives. A direct hit was a spectacular sight – steam burst into clouds as it shot through bullet holes in the engine.

On a clear day John could see the massive First World War Canadian memorial at Vimy. (In April, 1917 the Canadian Corps took the ridge from the Germans at a cost of more than 14,000 Canadian casualties, including 3,598 killed.)

Although life sometimes appeared normal, John was only too aware that one small mistake – or bad break – could land him in a prisoner-of-war camp, or worse.

"When I first met up with the underground the invasion was imminent. You couldn't move without documents – the German police insisted on paper. You might be all right if you hit just the ordinary German soldier – you could pull the wool over his eyes. But some of the others, you couldn't."

John knew that an American air crew had been picked up; he heard they had been careless when going out with local girls.

John relied on the wisdom of his underground hosts, even if it meant spending an uncomfortable and smelly evening in a chicken house.

"I was in the home of an underground member. Someone was coming to visit and my host didn't want the visitor to know I was there."

### Special Sandwich

Chuck Stewart of Killam, Alberta, had a much scarier experience. Chuck was the only survivor of a *Lancaster* crew shot down while attacking buzz bomb launching sites.

"The Germans would often round up people to help repair the railroads. Chuck was caught up in a sweep and taken to a school. He had no papers. He was even wearing a wristwatch with his name and service number inscribed on it. Fortunately no one noticed.

"Before anyone asked him for documents the underground made up false papers and had them smuggled in by waitresses working in the school. They hid an identity card among the sandwiches."

The French succeeded in passing off the pilot as the village idiot. Chuck helped by uttering some unintelligible grunts; the Germans gave up on him.

*This wreath-laying took place at Bouilly-les-Mines in 1944 soon after the Germans had been driven from this region of France. John McTrach, right, accompanies a French general (Leclerc).*







*Crew members of Halifax bomber crew #76 Squadron (RAF), left to right, Rear Gunner "Tich" Compton, Pilot George Whitehead, Navigator John McTrach. They escaped capture when forced down in 1944 in France.*

Some of the underground members in the town were not so fortunate. After the Allies had landed in France in 1944 a group from the town tried to reach the Allied beachhead. The Germans intercepted the party and executed all of them. John knew relatives of some of the eleven or twelve killed.

John's escape to England had some frightening moments. The party set out just when the Germans launched the Battle of the Bulge, forcing the Allies to retreat.

#### **Land Navigation**

"We almost got caught up in that big battle. We met an American armoured unit. They were lost and were glad to see a navigator. They were heading into Belgium. But I told them 'You're not going up there with me.'

"We headed for the Amiens area. A DC3 tanker plane, designed for carrying fuel, took us to the beachhead. From there we crossed over to Essex in a landing craft. That was September 7, 1944, the very day that the first V-2 rocket landed. It demolished a whole neighbourhood in London."

Then came a week in security for "debriefing." He gave details of his escape and identified the people who had sheltered him.

The best part was that he collected about \$1800 in back pay and today receives a small pension as a result of his wartime experience. The cheques are marked "POW" but, in fact, John was never a prisoner.

On return to England John learned that his pilot, George Whitehead, had escaped through Spain. He was

thrown in jail for a time and had a long wait in Gibraltar. But even then he reached England a short time before John.

At one stage John and "Tich" Compton had plans to take the Spanish escape route. They started out for a train to Paris. But something misfired – their guides didn't show up – and they had to give up the attempt.

#### **Keeping in Touch**

The pilot and Len Stokes are the only crew members John has kept in touch with over the years. George Whitehead, after many years as a judge, has retired in Boston, Lincolnshire. Len has also retired in England after working most of his adult life in the United States.

John has many photos of Adrienne Jacques and her family, who gave him shelter. However, many of his most precious wartime mementoes, including his false identity papers, have been lost. Thieves broke into his home in the early 1980s and carried off a safe containing a lot of his most cherished possessions.

## Teenager called up in last months as German Army got desperate



**Siegfried Lenk**

*Before moving to the Hanover, Ont. area in the early 1990s Siegfried and Diana spent more than a dozen years in Milton and for a time operated a commercial bakery.*

**S**IEGFRIED LENK WAS AMONG many thousands of teen-agers called up by the German Army in the last desperate months of the war.

He followed his father's advice rather than Army orders – that's probably how he survived to tell this story.

Siegfried was ten when the war began, and for him life was normal until the heavy bombing started in 1941. That year his family moved from central Berlin to the outskirts – like moving from downtown Toronto to Mississauga. His father operated a bakery in the suburb.

"The inner city where I used to live was just leveled. A train circles this section – it takes about an hour to make the trip. When I took that train in 1946 I didn't see one building intact. All were leveled or burned out.

"They estimated that in the city of Berlin – not counting the suburbs – 80 per cent was totally destroyed."

Siegfried's neighborhood did not entirely escape the bombs. Windows in his home had to be replaced often; the home was hit several times by firebombs.

"Once the attack came so fast we didn't have time to reach the shelter. We were hit by a firebomb which lodged between the house and the garage. We used a long fire-hook from the bakery to work it free. Then we smothered it with sand and doused the smouldering roof with a small hand pump."

The Lenks' landlord proved himself a hero. Wearing a steel helmet he stood on a roof with a megaphone.

"Whenever a house got hit he bellowed 'Number 47 just got hit. Get there!' People rushed to pour sand on the firebombs. He saved many homes. I still admire his guts."

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*Students spotted fire bombs during a 1943 daylight bombing raid.*

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On another occasion a regular bomb missed the house by a few yards and dug itself into the pavement. Fortunately it was a dud.

"Here's a funny thing. Where we lived was just across the road from an SS (Storm Troopers) garrison. I was a bit worried because I thought the Americans would want to level it.

"No. Don't worry', my father said, 'That is where the Americans are going when they come into Berlin.' He said that in 1942 or '43 when people thought we might win the war. But my dad never doubted the outcome. 'There's no way we can win against the Americans,' he said.

"As a matter of fact during all the bombing only one stray bomb fell on that huge SS complex."

Eventually when the Americans occupied part of Berlin after the war they did make use of the SS site.

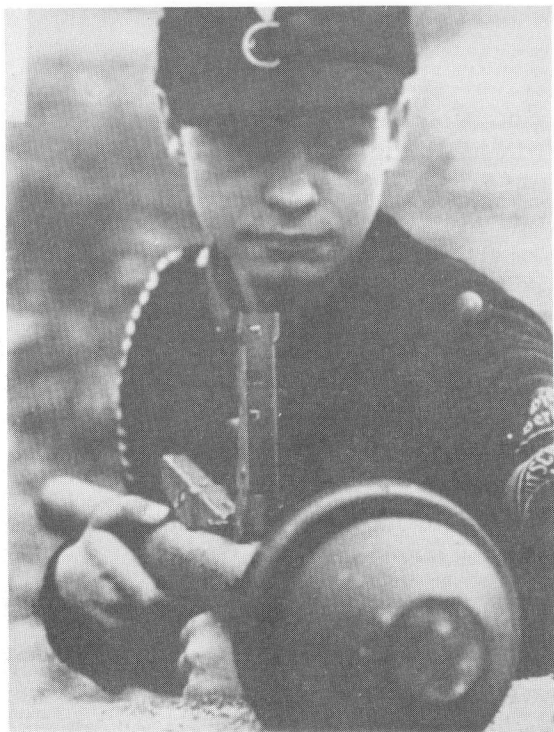
Siegfried will never forget a 1943 daylight attack by American bombers. He was one of a dozen students assigned to the school roof to spot firebombs. Their immediate area escaped damage and the students had a perfect vantage point.

Siegfried believes between 400 and 500 bombers attacked Berlin that day – wave, after wave. Low enough to be clearly seen, they sprayed the city with firebombs; it looked like a heavy rain.

The "raindrops" were about three feet long and weighed 30 to 40 pounds.

"When they hit they started spraying magnesium. If you caught these things right away and threw sand on them then you were O.K. We were trained on that in school.

German fighter planes and anti-aircraft guns put up a



*Unidentified member of the Hitlerjugend called up in the last months of the war, holding a panzerfaust (bazooka).*

stiff defence. From his lookout Siegfried counted 20 planes shot down. Next day the newspapers reported 160 planes destroyed. Such heavy losses, Siegfried says, caused the Allies to shift to night raids.

Night attacks held their own terrors; sleep often had to be snatched between siren blasts.

"You got up and rushed to a cellar or bunk for cover. Then an hour later it was 'all clear' and you went to bed again. Half an hour's sleep – then here it goes again. Air raid sirens.

"I remember one night I think we had about four air raids. It was a rule that whenever air raids lasted a certain period of time there was no school the next day. There was no use – the students were going to sleep anyway.

"Our kind of stress was that we never knew whether we were going to be alive the next morning."

By late 1944 Siegfried was caught up in Germany's last-ditch effort to escape disaster.

"We had an emergency graduation, more or less, four months before the term actually ended. Those who were born in 1928 were assigned to anti-aircraft batteries as helpers. A couple of my classmates got killed there.

"Those born in 1929 were put into the factories. I was sent to Zeiss Ikon to make optical instruments; I was there for a couple of months. Then I was drafted."

His training consisted of about a month in boot camp. He took crash courses on the rifle, the light machine gun and the "panzerfaust," a hand-held anti-tank gun.

"The danger was for the guy shooting it, not so much for the tank. It was like a rocket. You had to hold it in a pipe about four feet long and one-and-a-half inches in diameter. When you fired it, anyone within 10 or 15 feet directly behind you would be barbecued.

"It had a little warhead. If you hit a tank the rocket welded through the vehicle and exploded inside. You could kill a tank all right but you had to be within 50 yards of it.

"When we were trained I thought, 'I'm not that crazy to go within 50 yards of a tank!'"

Just before he left for boot camp his father, an ardent anti-Nazi, gave Siegfried some advice.

"'Whatever you do,' he said, 'don't shoot an American. The first chance you have, throw away your gun and walk over (surrender) because this war is finished. All these guys (Nazis) are trying to do is save their own skin. They're using you as cannon fodder.'"

After boot camp Siegfried's unit was posted to the Elbe River, facing the Americans. The youngest of the soldiers was 14; others were 15, 16 or 17.

"We were sitting there with a few of those anti-tank devices, a couple of light machine guns and our rifles. We dug fox holes into a huge dyke. The Elbe was fairly wide at that point."

The Americans could easily have crossed the river. But they didn't. Siegfried found out after the war that General Patton had orders from Washington to stay at the Elbe until the Russians took Berlin.

About the second or third week of March, just before Siegfried's 16th birthday, the unit was ordered to pack its gear and head for Berlin to defend the city against the Russians.

Siegfried and two of his buddies wanted no part of it. During a rest break while marching to the railway station they headed into the bushes to answer the call of nature – and never came back.

"We started running like hell. Hiding in the bush and running. We got back to the river after dark and hid in a barn, under the hay.

"The next morning you should have seen this. Just like an anthill. That barn came alive. We thought we were the only ones in there. We were the only three from our unit. But there must have been at least one hundred other guys hiding in there. Nobody had any weapons; they had dropped everything."

All were in uniform. Siegfried and his friends had nothing else to wear. At the beginning of training the Army made a pile of the civilian clothes and burned them.

Their captain made no bones about the message: if the youngsters wanted to desert they had to do it in uniform. And face the consequences.

That morning what looked like a huge raft arrived; it had two outboard motors. Half a dozen Americans were aboard.

"We were all standing there with our hands up. The Americans ferried us across – it took quite a few trips.

"Then we got our first look at the force we were supposed to stop. I couldn't believe it. There must have been thousands of tanks standing there. As far as you could see there were Sherman tanks."

They became prisoners-of-war in an open field with barbed wire fences. For the first four days there was no food or water and only a few soldiers had blankets as part of their gear.

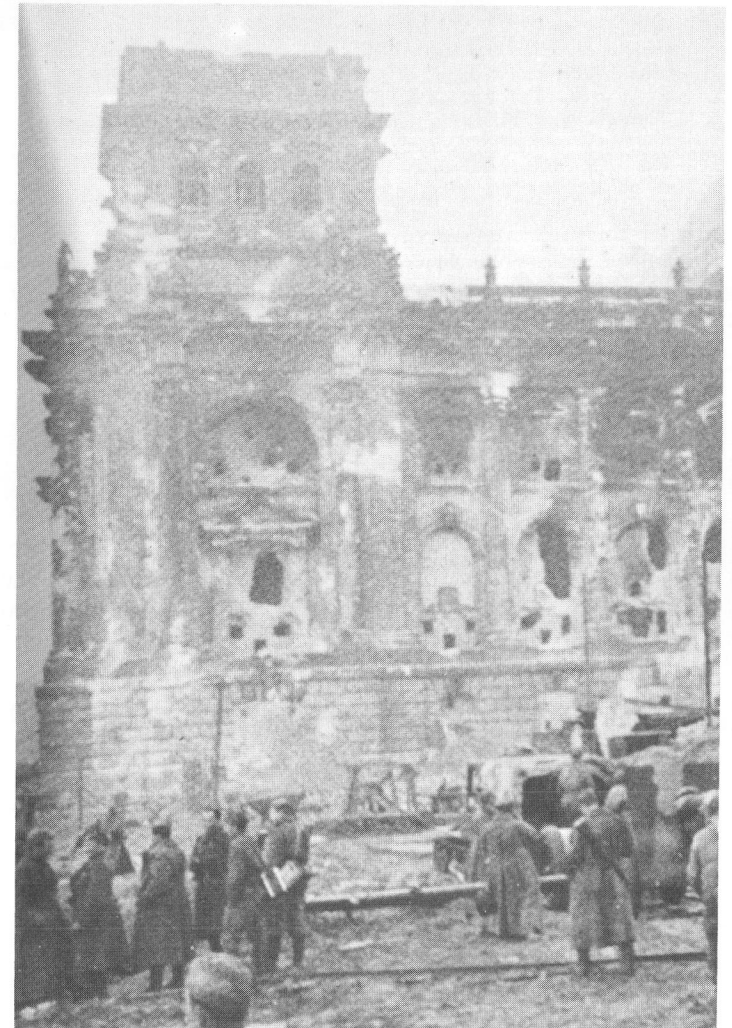
After four cold weeks in the open they were handed over to the British and transported to Holland. Conditions improved a bit – ten men to a tent.

They remained there until the war ended in May; they then moved to a camp in Belgium.

Everyone there was from the eastern part of Germany, including Berlin. In Siegfried's group no one was over 18.

In September, 1945, the British started to send the soldiers home, one section a week. After three weeks Siegfried's group was the only one still in camp. Then things came to a halt for almost a month. Siegfried and his friend clamoured for an explanation.

A British sergeant finally gave them the answer. He



*The Battle of Berlin has ended. In much of the city nothing remains but rubble and ruins.*



General Alfred Jodl  
(centre) signs the  
document of  
unconditional sur-  
render of all the  
German armed  
forces, May 7,  
1945.



explained that the first three groups got as far as the border of East Germany. There the Russians hooked up the trains to their own locomotives and hauled the troops to prisoner-of-war camps in Russia.

"That's why they didn't let us go. Was I ever lucky. We stayed in the camp until, I think, February, 1946 and then they decided to let us go. But not to East Germany – they put us on a train to a small town in West Germany. Our army passports were stamped to show we had been officially released.

"I stayed for a few days at a type of youth hostel before being taken in by a family, who provided me with civilian clothes.

"I got rid of the uniform. Can you imagine sleeping in that thing for a year? It wasn't exactly Pierre Cardin any more.

"In exchange for my room and board I chopped wood all day."

Siegfried was waiting for an opportunity to cross into East Germany and return to his family in the American-occupied sector of Berlin. There were guards at the border but once in East Germany you could travel freely. This, of course, was before the Berlin Wall was erected.

Siegfried soon heard about a guide who secretly took people into East Germany after dark. He wanted 50 marks a person but he settled for Siegfried's last 20.

After guiding the group across the border the guide pointed in the direction of the nearest railway station and headed back.

The trip to Berlin was horrendous – people riding on the roof, and hanging from the platform.

"They say sometimes people are packed like sardines. Unfortunately we didn't have any oil between us.

"I got into Berlin about midnight and lo and behold the subway was still running.

"Our house was still standing; I could see light in the window. My mother answered the door; my father and sisters also were at home. For me that was the end of the war."

(An estimated two million Germans died in the war. Although Siegfried's immediate family survived, an uncle died in an air raid on Leipzig. His two sisters spent part of the war with another uncle in Saxony, outside the heavily bombed areas.)

Siegfried discovered that war's end was not the end of hardship. There was no school and no way to learn a trade; Siegfried went to work with his father and became a baker and pastry chef, his life-long trade.

His worst postwar experience came when the Russians blockaded Berlin. The Allies responded with an airlift.

"You could set your watch by it – every minute a plane landed, bringing in food, coal and other necessities.

"Most people were freezing in their homes. Our family was lucky; we got enough coal because we were operating a bakery."

Siegfried married in 1952 and shortly afterwards decided to emigrate. His first choice was the United States but he had no sponsor. He thought about Australia but changed his mind when he found out how hot it could be.

He had no such fears about Canada and he liked what he heard from our officials about the freedom, prosperity and low taxes in Canada.

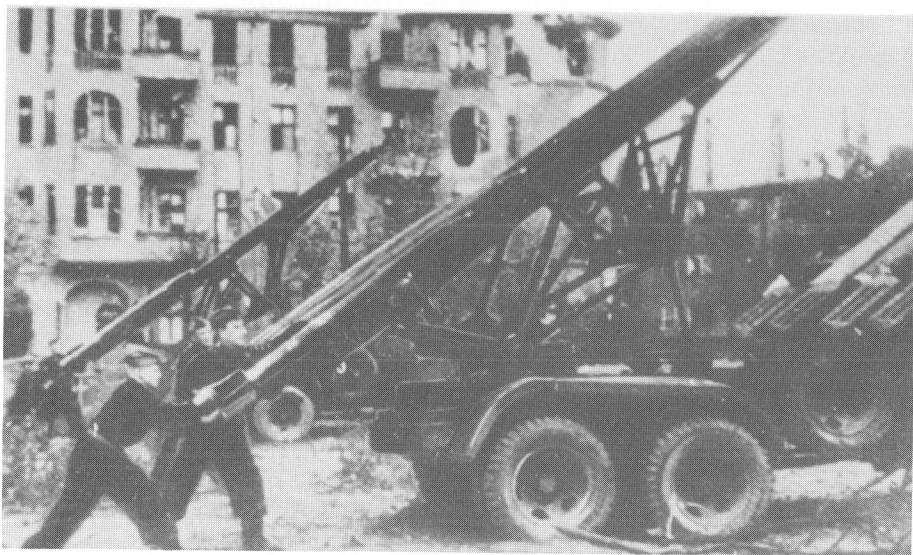
He landed in Quebec City on July 2nd, one of the

hottest days that year. Another shock came when he visited a Quebec City pub.

He was amazed at the separate entrances for men and women and at the way men downed one beer after another. No sign of the friendly chatter of Berlin pubs.

The waiter, a German immigrant, explained:

"When you're here a while you'll find out. The average Canadian goes to work and has to do what his boss tells him. He goes on strike and does what the union tells him to do. And then the poor guy goes home and he has to do what his wife tells him to do. And you wonder why they drink?"



*A Russian Katyusha rocket-launcher on the outskirts of Berlin.*

# Did Lord Haw-Haw save Gunner Ramsden from disaster at Dieppe?



**Rodney Ramsden**

*Rodney has been in Milton since 1990; he came to be close to his oldest son.*

**W**HEN NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN, the British Prime Minister, returned from a meeting with Adolf Hitler in 1938 Rodney Ramsden realized war was inevitable. Rodney remembers Chamberlain waving his little piece of paper, plus his umbrella.

"Hitler never worried about little bits of paper – that was the last thing he worried about," Rodney says.

Rodney, then 22 and working for an optician, responded by joining the British Territorial Army (similar to our militia). He trained in the evening with the 60th City of London Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment, Royal Artillery. He was to serve six years in Britain, France, North Africa, Sicily and Italy.

Whenever he wants to check on his memories he doesn't have to go farther than his living room bookshelf for his complete set of the "Pictorial History of the War." Hutchinson, a British publisher, produced an edition of the glossy magazine every week throughout the war: stories and photos as they appeared in the press.

Rodney began the collection and his parents carried on while he was away. The 15 bound volumes are one of his prized possessions; he believes he may be the only person in Canada to have the complete set.

Rodney was called up August 24, 1939, ten days before Britain declared war on Germany. His first duty was digging placements for anti-aircraft guns in a park in Beckenham, Kent.

In October Rodney's unit went to France with the British Expeditionary Force. For seven months, he says, nothing happened over there. And when something did, it was a nightmare.

*Like clockwork at Dunkerque Germans  
bombed British troops every 30 minutes.*

Rodney's section of two anti-aircraft guns had about 125 men. They had no personal guns except half a dozen rifles for sentry duty. When the land war started they had nothing to fight with.

Rodney's 194 battery was stationed at Rosières in northern France; *Blenheim* planes stationed there were dropping leaflets on enemy territory. Most of these planes were shot down.

In May, 1940 the leaflet war ended when a spotter in Rodney's unit shouted "Enemy aircraft!" They were *Dorniers*.

"I don't know how many, I never counted them – I was doing my job. They dropped their bombs on an adjacent railway marshalling yard. They weren't worried about the (*Blenheim*) airfield at all. They did their best to get rid of us as well."

## Air Heroes

Rodney saw four *Gladiators* (biplane fighters) rise to do battle. With their top speed of about 200 miles an hour, they had no chance. All were brought down; for Rodney the four pilots were heroes. He doesn't know whether any survived.

With no further role there for anti-aircraft guns Rodney's unit moved east towards the Belgian border. They passed Vimy Ridge where 3600 Canadians died in a celebrated victory in April, 1917.

"What we didn't like was the fact that the sides of the roads were lined with REME (engineers) and other (British) service units. Nothing to do with the infantry but they were being used as infantry."

Another warning signal came a little farther on. A small airfield used by *Lysander* planes for artillery spotting

was deserted but masses of undamaged equipment had been left behind.

This was a lucky break for Rodney's unit, which had no transportation. They helped themselves to a large vehicle and loaded it with command post equipment. Soldiers also crowded aboard. Towed behind were two nine-ton guns and the nine-man crews.

They had to hurry – a German armoured column was reported a half mile away.

#### Chaos

They continued east but soon they could hardly move because so many civilians and French troops crowded the roads – as Rodney says, "going in the wrong direction."

"The civilians had been put on the road by the Germans. We saw that for ourselves. We saw Cassel bombed by Stukas (out of range of the British anti-aircraft guns). It was just razed to the ground."

It was complete disorder. German parachute troops were landing throughout the area and *Messerschmidts* were strafing civilians.

This wasn't the kind of war Rodney had trained for.

"The whole of the British Army had been trained with kid gloves, do everything according to the book and so on. You weren't allowed to strafe civilians; you weren't allowed to bomb a town for that reason (clog the roads). Our opinion of what was happening changed completely."

As things stood, there was nothing his unit could do. So they turned north on the Belgian border; about half-way there they were told they were to become anti-tank gunners.

Today Rodney laughs at the "anti-tank" order. But it wasn't funny then.

#### Lucky Turn

"We had no open sights. The guns were made in 1916...all sorts of backlash. The orders were that number 1 (soldier) was to look through the barrel at the tank, load it and fire. (Laughter) Our guns had a platform about three feet from the ground and were sitting up higher than that. We wouldn't have lasted two minutes with a machine-gun, let alone anything else. So we weren't very happy there."

Fortunately the test never came. As Rodney understands it, Hitler – hoping he could convince the British to form an alliance – held up Rommel for a week. By that time Rodney's unit had joined the retreat towards Dunkerque.

Within site of the port, having run out of ammunition, they rendered their guns useless and abandoned them.

#### Two-mile Queue

"We joined the queue, which was a couple of miles long, leading to Dunkerque."

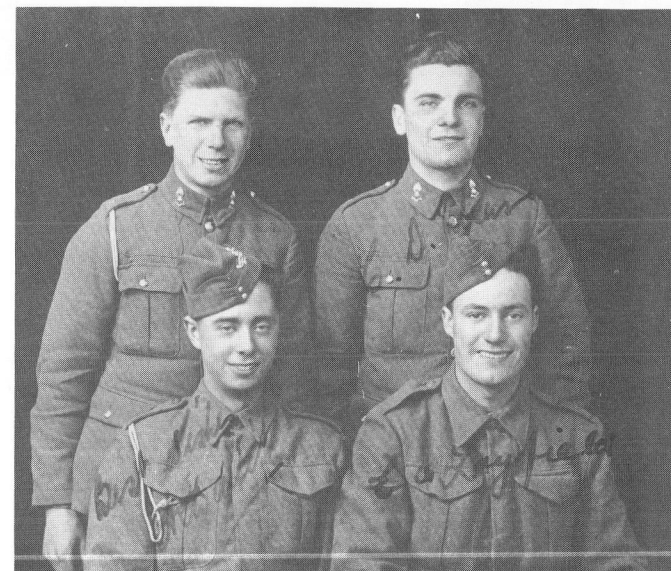
The evacuation was well under way. Some of the troops were wading or swimming to rescue ships off shore; others were being helped to a white hospital ship.

"You couldn't mistake it. Whether it was bombed or torpedoed or what, I don't know. But it disappeared in two minutes."

#### Methodical Bombing

For some reason those in charge of Rodney's unit decided against trying to reach the rescue

*Taken before Dunkerque, this photo shows gunners Rodney Ramsden, rear left, and Doug Akass in British Army dress uniform, which was not used afterwards in the war. Gunners Keith Davis and Jack Layfield are in British battle dress.*







*When Dorniers bombed a marshalling yard like this at Channe, on the Somme, it was Rodney's first brush with the enemy.*

vessels. Instead they moved along the shore – a terrifying experience.

"Gerry had a very methodical way of working. Every hour on the hour we were bombed by high-level bombers. Every hour, on the half-hour, we were bombed by dive-bombers. You looked at your watch and said, 'Take cover'. And you got into some of the holes.

"Luckily it was sand because you had to get more or less a direct hit to get hurt. It wasn't very pleasant. They had screamers on the dive-bombers; they had their machine guns going as well as their bombs. It was rather a hair-raising type of thing."

Eventually they got into Dunkerque harbour. The last night they slept on cobblestones on the street. Thick smoke

was everywhere – the Allies were burning oil supplies to keep them from falling to the Germans.

"As we woke up in the morning and stretched ourselves, our sergeant came running up to what was left of the jetty. 'Sorry, you people, the last of the boats has gone. There's nothing being allowed in now.' That was it. He formed up and away we went."

They were heading for the perimeter to bolster a desperate defence. No shortage of rifles now – all kinds were available from the dead or wounded.

They had just got under way when another soldier dashed up: "About turn. Quick march. Double march."

#### **Cool Captain**

A fishing smack had suddenly arrived at the pier, where it wasn't supposed to be. The men jumped about ten feet from the pier to the deck of the Scottish fishboat. Minutes later it moved off.

"It was a lovely day – beautiful sunshine. This old Scottish captain was looking up into the sky and as the bombs were coming down he was getting out of the way. He was a marvelous bloke. I wish I knew who he was."

About 30 minutes later the vessel moved into fog to reach the destroyer Whitehall. It was crowded with escaping soldiers. Still needing repairs, the vessel had been pulled out of drydock in England to help with the evacuation.

"There I had the best bully beef sandwich and cup of cocoa that I'd had for ages. It was lovely. That took us to England. We landed at Dover."

Rodney's unit, the 60th City of London Regiment, suffered huge losses. Two batteries were almost completely

annihilated. The other three batteries lost about 20 per cent of their men; in all more than 2,000 taken prisoner or killed.

(For its performance in France Rodney's section was awarded the Military Medal, which is always awarded to the senior non-commissioned officer. The man was soon an officer, advancing with amazing speed. By 1942 he was a general involved in shipping cargoes to Russia. He was a member of a London family (Martin) that owned a ship-ping company.)

At Dover a train was waiting.

#### Why the Waving?

"As the train went along, what we couldn't understand was everyone was waving to us. As if we had won something. And we were all hanging our heads, because, let's face it, we had to retreat."

But they enjoyed the tea and biscuits offered at stops along the way. The reception wasn't quite so warm when they reached Winchester and the depot of the King's Royal Rifles. The Rifles didn't appreciate the retreat and they let the soldiers know it.

"The first thing we did was sleep; we slept for practically 24 hours. We got a few telegrams off...people hadn't heard anything from us since the beginning of May. (It was now June 3.)

"We eventually got the unit together again. We took a very long train ride – about two days – to get to Aberystwyth, Wales, which was normally a three or four-hour run. We were billeted in boarding houses, doing nothing. I got myself a touch of quinsy and went to the hospital. (It was the only time during the war that he was away from the unit because of illness or injury.)

During the next two years Rodney's battery helped defend several English cities and underwent intensive training.

#### Home Defence

It spent five months firing night barrages in defence of Birmingham. The German planes used cross radar beams to locate the city at night; they couldn't penetrate the fighter defence during daylight.

The unit also operated at much-bombed Coventry and at Hull, where so many mines had been dropped that the port was almost unusable.

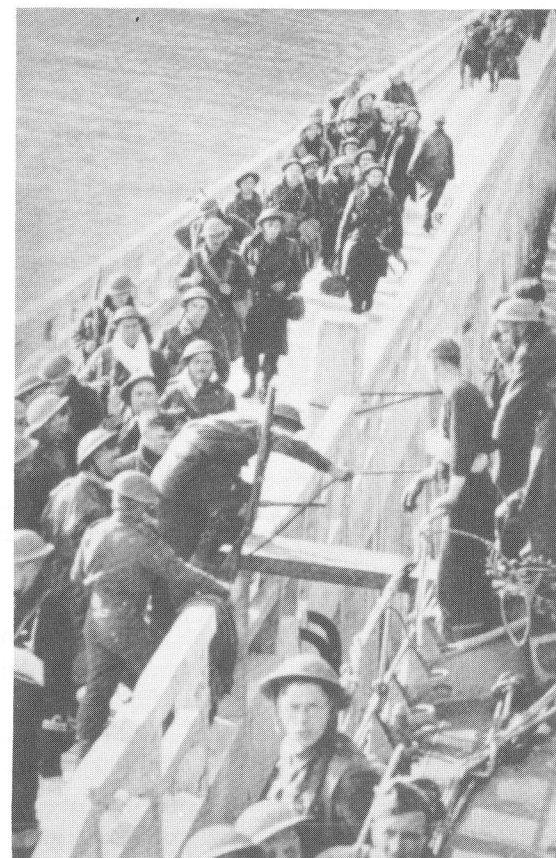
The battery had the help of radar by then –early summer of 1942 – but it was primitive, Rodney says. It was cumbersome to move and there was no means of transferring information to the equipment or the guns.

When the plane's height and position (angle) had been computed, someone would shout "Now!" and the crew would fire.

Rodney remembers one incident when the system worked perfectly – except that they brought down a British night-fighter. The airmen had forgotten to turn on their IFF (radar) system to identify themselves as friends.

The two fliers, who escaped by parachute, had some very unfriendly words for the gun crew. But those in charge of Hull's defence commended the gunners.

The regiment also had earned an excellent reputation



*By the time Rodney's group arrived at this pier at Dunkerque it was difficult to use. It had been bombed every day and had been officially closed.*

for its work in France. This was a factor for its selection as part of a Combined Operations unit under Admiral Keyes. Known as 110 Force, it brought together many of those who had returned from Dunkerque.

#### Commando Tips

Much of the training was done at Loch Fyne, Scotland, where the Second Commandoes gave excellent instruction on use of barges. This was when the Commandoes were making almost weekly raids on Norway to blow up power stations and other installations. Infantry training was given by the Argyll and Sutherlands.

"We had to be able to fire any gun in the British Army and find out as much as we could about any German or Italian guns as well. We also did the whole training of field gunnery."

The Commandoes also taught them how to operate as a self-sufficient unit – to become guerrillas in a desperate situation.

At one stage the Force found itself in Greenoch supplied with pith helmets, shorts and other hot-weather gear they would need for an invasion of Dakar. But Rodney's unit and many others were suddenly pulled off with no explanation. (Those who did go apparently had a miserable time and Rodney has had no regret about missing out.)

He has good memories of long sessions at Straven, Scotland (near Hamilton), especially training on newly-arrived tank-landing craft from Canada or the U.S. They were big enough to accommodate both a heavy gun and its tractor.

"You would only have to manhandle the gun on backwards, reverse the Matador (tractor), hitch up and you

were ready to drive off. That made the job easier. (Previously the gun and tractor needed separate barges and had to be hitched up on shore.)

#### Vanishing Asset

Another skill they mastered was camouflage. They used netting to hide the gun and especially to change the shape of the gun shadows so they could not be identified from the air. Their ability won high marks from the local Home Guard unit after a battle exercise.

"They were supposed to find us and annihilate us if they could. They couldn't even find us – in their own territory."

In July, 1942 the 110 Force was sent to the Isle of Wight in southern England. At the time the episode had little significance for Rodney; in later years, however, it became important.

Rodney's force was assembled at one end of the island; Canadians were at the other end, near Shanklin and Ventnor.

"After we had been there about three days Lord Haw Haw, the English-speaking chap on German radio who told us that we shouldn't be fighting and so on, told us that we were going to invade Dieppe, stay there for a week and come out again.

"Lord Haw Haw told us that if we went in we'd be there for longer than a week because we'd be six foot under. Two days after that we were pulled out. Obviously the powers that be, having found out that they (Germans) knew all about us, decided to give it up."

#### Dieppe Debate

More than 50 years later he became heavily involved in the dispute about Dieppe.

Rodney believes that the British were planning to maintain a beachhead at Dieppe – otherwise they would not have needed heavy anti-aircraft guns like his. These guns were not taken on one-day raids, Rodney says.

In any event, Rodney recently was distressed about tv, book and newspaper coverage of the costly action (Aug. 19, 1942) at Dieppe. (Almost 5,000 Canadians took part: more than 900 were killed and almost 1900 taken prisoner.)

Specifically he resented references (in a British book) that suggested Mountbatten planned the raid for “personal glory.” This didn’t sound like the Mountbatten that Rodney knew.

“He was one of the best commanders I had been with. When he came to see us to do his inspections he always spoke to every single man.”

Furthermore, Rodney says, when the detailed planning for Dieppe was going on, Mountbatten was in the United States explaining to President Roosevelt why the British were in no position to meet the Russians’ demand for a second front.

#### Winston Speaks

Rodney also underlines a statement made by Winston Churchill in the British House of Commons September 8, 1942:

“I personally regarded the Dieppe assault to which I gave my sanction, as an indispensable preliminary to full-scale operations.”

A few months ago Rodney wrote to The Toronto Star complaining about the effect that some of the Dieppe publicity would have on relatives of those killed.

“If they (relatives) think the men at Dieppe were just

cannon fodder, well it’s not a very good memory for them,” Rodney says. “Instead of the fact that it was an authorized action.”

Rodney also stresses that the Commandoes taking part in the raid were accompanied by a British radar professor. They over-ran a German installation and carried back an important radar unit. This unit, Rodney says, allowed the British to make important improvements in their own radar.

Late in 1942 the 110 Force – although slightly smaller than a division – became Britain’s First Army and sailed for North Africa. This venture, says Rodney, proved a lot easier than Churchill had expected.

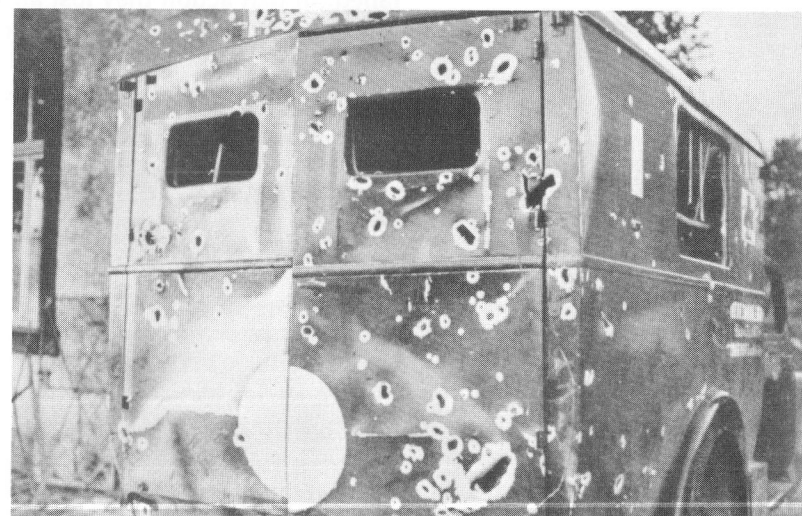
The Prime Minister was prepared for several months of fighting to stabilize a beachhead. But when the First Army landed at Bougie, Algeria, the French forces surrendered very quickly.

#### Stubborn Guards

“The Guards – they were slightly less than a brigade – went straight through. They almost reached Tunis. But the Germans dropped a complete division of airborne troops and drove them back (west) as far as famous Long Stop Hill.

Just before Christmas the Anti-Aircraft

*Strafing by fighter planes (with cannon) caused chaos along columns of refugees. The Germans would strafe about two miles at a time on straight roads.*





unit negotiated "Messerschmidt Alley" – strewn with burned-out tanks, trucks and other vehicles – to help the Guards.

"We were used as field artillery to cover them. They wanted to take Long Stop because it was preventing our troops from doing anything.

"The Guards took Long Stop that day. The idea was to hand it over to the Americans, which they did. Unfortunately the Americans were in jeeps and didn't even go to the top of the hill.

"When they were asked what went wrong, they said: 'Oh, we can't do anything there. Too hot for us.'

"So the Guards took the hill again and handed it over to the Free French, and they at least had a go, and although they tried to hold it, they couldn't.

"The Guards tried to take it again. This time they failed. In that action they lost all their officers and all their senior non-commissioned officers. When they came back they looked like they had been dragged through a hedge backwards. This was the day after Boxing Day. I've never seen anyone as worn out as they were."

#### Slippery Going

That was the worst Christmas season Rodney ever had. Heavy losses and weather so cold and miserable it was impossible to ride on the guns. Instead the crew had to walk alongside using chocks to help prevent the guns from sliding off the icy roads into knee-deep mud. And the bully beef stew at Christmas dinner did nothing to chase the gloom.

Shortly afterwards Rodney's unit was ordered into southern Tunisia to support the Eighth Army, which earlier had won the key battle of El Alamein.

Rodney's first concern was to find out how his older brother, Fred, had made out; he was with the 44th Division, the "Black Cat" unit.

"They were absolutely smashed at El Alamein. There is no 44th Division," a soldier said. For Rodney this meant his brother had been killed.

Another sad happening was the accidental bombing of two British regiments – the East York and the Yorks and Lancs. Sent to relieve some of the Eighth Army units, they had just got into position when they were hit. The attackers were *Maryland* bombers attached to the Eighth Army and piloted by Americans.

Rodney heard that the East Yorks suffered more casualties from the Americans than they ever had from the Germans.

For Rodney's unit the going was much easier – there was no sign of enemy planes. Soon the anti-aircraft guns returned north, close to the line formed by the hard-pressed Germans.

#### Mass Surrender

"Then the Eighth Army came along and Montgomery gave us a talk. He said we were starting for Tunis the following day – it was a two-day march. He said that probably the line (German) would break but it might just roll back. But whatever happened, we were going to Tunis.

"We started off in the morning before daybreak. There were three columns, each with a flail tank against mines.

"As we went through the line folded back in the main, but finally disappeared because the Ghurkas and other soldiers were taking so many prisoners that they couldn't even take the arms off them.

"About four or five British soldiers with about five hundred Germans, all with their arms. I've never seen so many prisoners. It was terrific.

"The following day we went into Tunis. When we got there, there were no forces at all. The local people were doing their flag-waving and what have you.

"Some of them said they were being shot at by German soldiers 'over there'. We sort of spread out and went forward and these people put up their arms. We went in and took their lugs. They asked who we were.

"When we said 'Ack Ack' one of them was furious. He threw his hat on the ground and stomped on it. They were Hermann Goering's Grenadiers. Captured by 'Ack Ack' – it was really funny."

#### White Christmas

Not long afterwards Rodney was back in Bougie, Algeria for more barge training before moving to a staging area at Sfax on the Tunisian coast. The heat was suffocating during the day and hardly better at night.

It was scarcely the place for it but one evening Rodney heard someone singing "White Christmas." That was his first indication that the Americans had arrived, complete with movie theatre.

Soon the troops were ready to move off. Rodney boarded an LST, a Halifax-made landing ship he hadn't seen before. A few sailors formed the crew.

Heavy vehicles such as the Ack Ack guns and ammunition trucks were in the hold. Jeeps and lighter vehicles were on the deck.

"We finally set sail in a convoy and eventually found ourselves passing Malta. Then it got rough – the top deck

was actually awash. When one of the tanks down in the hold broke loose, we had to go down and try to manhandle that. Luckily we got it secured without any damage.

"There was only one sailor who wasn't seasick. He got up and made us some breakfast the following day. But not many were up to eat it."

They were told they were heading for Sicily and would land after airborne troops and Commandoes had done their work.

#### Dry Landing

They landed without opposition at Porto Palo, the southernmost tip of Sicily. The force was almost identical to the First Army of North Africa but it was no longer known by that name and was now commanded by Montgomery.

"When our ship landed it went right up to the coast and all we had to do was jump two or three feet of water. I never even got my feet wet."

They soon were well housed in what had been German huts and a cookhouse, part of a light anti-aircraft site. At this stage the only threat was from local gangs, who killed several soldiers (none in Rodney's unit). Their method was to sneak up and pull back on the sol-

*British buildings suffered heavy damage in attacks such as this at Canterbury which was in retaliation for heavy British bombing attacks on Germany.*



dier's helmet. The victim was stabbed to death while trying to keep from being strangled by his own chin strap.

The force reached Syracuse without much opposition. When the enemy made a stand at Catania the Allies countered with a glider force. This, in Rodney's opinion, was far from a success.

"There were gliders everywhere out in the sea. They (American pilots) let them go before they should have done."

(More than 20 years later Rodney asked a fellow worker in London how he had acquired a limp. He identified himself as one of the glider troops at Catania.)

#### Triple Landing

From Catania it was easy going to Massena where the Sicilian campaign ended. Shortly afterwards the Canadian and U.S. forces arrived; they had made separate landings the same day as the British.

While the Sicilians were setting off fireworks to mark what they thought was the end of the war, the three Allied forces prepared to invade Italy itself.

As soon as Salerno had been captured Rodney's group, now armed with 3.7-inch guns, landed on the east coast of Italy, eventually crossing to the Naples area.

What stands out for Rodney from his months in Italy are the uncertainties of fighting with inexperienced allies.

He was assigned to the American 5th Army under Mark Clark advancing up the west coast. By this time he was a driver operator on observation post duty.

"I will always remember when the First Armoured Infantry (U.S.) came up. They were so nervous; I think this was their first action.

"They were smoking cigarettes at about a rate of five minutes a time. There was so much smoke you could hardly breathe.

"When you get anyone scared like that it rubs off – you can't help it. I've never been so scared in my life.

"Things didn't improve when the Brazilians arrived shortly afterwards. I didn't even know the Brazilians were there. They didn't know we were there either and the first thing we knew they were shooting at us."

#### Noise Complaint

A few nights later Rodney's unit had been firing about an hour when the Brazilian commander sent a radio message. He wanted the noise stopped because his men couldn't sleep. The British major was not amused.

Another unusual incident occurred at a small town near Pisa. Rodney ran into Scottish-speaking Italians. They were unhappy.

"Where have you been? Are you frightened of these Germans?"

The complainers were families of Scottish soldiers who had served in Italy during World War 1 and had settled there afterwards.

About this time Rodney had his first encounter with what was then known as the Negro Division (U.S. Army) and he was far from impressed.

"Every little movement was fired at – they thought it was Gerry. That division, in my opinion, was totally untrained. They had no idea what was happening at all."

A few days later it didn't matter any more: the British Army decided anti-aircraft units were no longer needed in Italy. Rodney's unit withdrew cautiously – "bullets were

flying around everywhere" – south to the Florence area. Almost immediately the Germans counter-attacked but they were thrown back by Sikh reinforcements from the 10th India Division.

Soon Rodney's unit was enjoying a week's leave in Rome.

### Happy Day

Then came one of the great moments of the war for Rodney. His brother Fred, supposedly killed in North Africa, tracked Rodney down in Florence. He recognized markings on the Ack Ack vehicles.

Fred described how his 44th Division had been "smashed up" and lost all its equipment at El Alamein. He said he had "crawled all across the desert poking for mines with his bayonet."

The brothers wrote a joint letter home.

Another surprise awaited Rodney on his return to base – he had been transferred to Royal Signals. This meant another driver-operator's training course but snowy roads gave it a bit of a challenge.

Rodney then volunteered to look after a small movie theatre in Santa Georgia. That's where he celebrated V-E Day – very cautiously.

Because of the fierce rivalry between the Italian Fascists and Communists the British had banned all alcoholic drink. Rodney couldn't even find a glass of wine to toast victory in Europe.

It was the beginning of August before Rodney got a leave home. While he was in London the authorities decided to demobilize his age group. He spent his final few weeks in uniform at Guisborough, Yorkshire, where the

only excitement was watching disgruntled paratroopers smash up bars.

He was a civilian again a few days before Christmas 1945.

*A Sherman tank arrived in Florence to assist in clearing snipers.*





# For Marg Robinson the RCAF meant fantastic ocean mail service



**Marg Robinson**

*Marg Robinson, who grew up in Hornby, retired to Milton after a career with Ontario Hydro.*

**F**OR MARG ROBINSON JOINING THE AIR FORCE in 1942 was the thing to do. Marg had just graduated from the High School on Martin Street.

"At the time just about everyone was joining up. It meant no more school!

"I joined up with Marion Giddings of Milton. She went into wireless and I went into the other stream, stenography."

Marg's training consisted of one month at a Bloor Street high school in Toronto.

"We weren't what you would call stenographers. But we did have a bit of typing and shorthand. Can you imagine the poor people trying to use us?"

Marg has forgotten the details of the basic military drill she took in Toronto. But she remembers it was pretty strenuous. It came in the morning before stenography classes.

Marg and others in the course boarded with Toronto families. When she transferred to Rockcliffe station near Ottawa she lived in barracks with 35 other airwomen – two-tiered bunks.

Marg was part of the maintenance squadron responsible for servicing overseas operations, including 168 Squadron and the Alouette Squadron. As far as she can recall Marg was an LAW (Leading Airwoman) throughout her three years at Rockcliffe.

Although Marg hasn't thought of her wartime career for years, she believes the group had to "fall in" once a day. The day began at 8 or 9 a.m. and finished at 4 or 5 p.m.

She has sharper memories of one aspect.

## **Fast Delivery**

"One of the 'Rockcliffe' squadrons delivered the mail

*Marg liked the Air Force well enough but got too much ham and raisin sauce.*

to Britain and brought it back. I could send a letter to an aunt in Britain and she had it the next day, uncensored."

Marg also has clear memories of the Ottawa climate.

"Ottawa is a brutally cold place. It is brutally hot there, too. But the cold!

"When you came in you would have your scarf up around your nose. Just your eyes showing. And if you didn't do it up you were up on charge. They weren't kidding.

"A charge of being improperly dressed because you might have lost an ear. Or a nose. They stopped you at the guardhouse to check you out."

Marg wasn't charged and she didn't hear of anyone who was.

"I think we were glad to do it (cover up). Maybe they were just scaring us."

Rockcliffe was a huge station and Marg thoroughly enjoyed her years there. She even thought the meals were pretty good.

Rockcliffe was where the meals for all service people were tested. And Marg felt the food passed with good marks, although she can't remember filling out a report card.

"I was brought up to eat what was in front of me. I wouldn't have thought of complaining and I don't think too many of the people I was with complained."

## **Life-long Aversion**

However, there are certain things she has never eaten since, especially ham with raisin sauce.

"I just got too much of it, I guess."

Marg remembers the huge dances at the station. And lining up in a massive building to collect her pay - \$15 once or twice a month, she's not sure which.

"But we thought it was wonderful. It was sheer profit."

She liked playing baseball and she did a lot of swimming, probably in the Ottawa River. Her skiing career was short. She got to the top of the hill, sat down on her skis and went down that way. She never tried it again.

Marg would have loved to go overseas. But she was too young when she first joined the Air Force and by the time she was of age the war was almost over. She was out of uniform when the war ended.

#### **No Mementoes**

Marg doesn't have many mementoes of her war years.

"I am a person who thinks ahead, not back. And space has often been at a premium."

Immediately after the war Marg took a one-year business course at a Toronto high school before beginning a career with Ontario Hydro.

Many service friends wrote to her shortly after she left the Air Force. Marg still keeps in touch with one of them, Dorothy (Colbens) Brooks of Angus, near Barrie. Dorothy was brought up in Brooks, Alberta.

Marion Giddings, who joined up with Marg, was transferred to British Columbia. She stayed on the West Coast and married there. Unfortunately, Marion died while still a young woman.

## Joins "Winnie" for trip home

When Trooper Ronald Dillow came home in January, 1946 after three years overseas, he was one of 18,000 aboard the *Queen Elizabeth*.

One of them was Winston Churchill, who had been defeated in the election seven months before.

But to the troops – and no doubt to Winston himself – he was still the powerful wartime figure. And he filled that role by addressing the servicemen before the ship landed at New York.

Ronald served in the Tank Corps of the Armoured Personnel Carrier unit (the Kangaroos). He saw action at Caen, Boulogne, Le Havre and up the coast into Belgium and Holland.

Near the Holland-German border he suffered shrapnel wounds that kept him out of action for two months.

Ronald's brother, Flight Sergeant Wallace Dillow, died in action near Berlin Dec. 29, 1943, a few days before he and Ronald were to get together.

## Nurses prepared for service in Europe

Major Edith Dick, matron of a Canadian General Hospital, supervised training of nurses before they went into Europe in the summer of 1944.

In full gear and sometimes wearing gas masks, the nurses marched more than ten miles on English roads. Some found the going pretty tough.

Edith was interviewed on one of the marches:

"The girls going into the battle zone are feeling it is a great privilege; they are lucky to have the training that will make them useful behind the front lines."

Edith served more than four years with the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps in Canada, the U.K. and Europe; she was Matron of No. 10 Canadian General Hospital.

In recognition of her service she received the Royal Red Cross First Class.

After the war Edith rejoined the Ontario Department of Health; she became Director of the nursing branch in 1947.

## Wartime job meant rooming in Toronto

For two years during the war Mary Morley Huddleston helped manufacture Bren machine guns at the John Inglis plant in Toronto.

During the week she roomed on Tyndall Street and walked to the plant on Strachan Avenue near the CNE. Mary remembers the security – she worked inside a locked wire cage.

It was a 45-minute walk each way but she didn't mind even when she was on the night shifts.

At the weekend Mary took the CPR train to the Court Street station in Milton and, of course, walked to the family home on Commercial Street.

Mary's brother, George Morley, was killed in France, a month after the invasion. Another brother James, badly wounded by shrapnel in North Africa, died a few years after the war.

## Telephone work meant keeping quiet

Life in wartime Britain meant a never-ending stress on secrecy. But it was even worse for Gwen Mills.

As a telephone specialist in top government offices she had to show her pass half a dozen times before reaching the "inner sanctum."

When she left the office she had to keep everything to herself. Many of the developments she knew about, including the 1941 flight of Rudolf Hess to Britain, later became headline news.



*Queen Mary in wartime camouflage.*

## Stan Marsh wins Distinguished Flying Medal



*Stan Marsh*

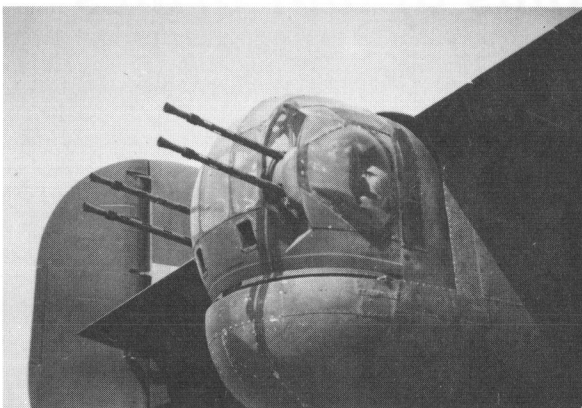
Stan Marsh was awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal in 1943 following a tour of operations in the Middle East.

He was a Wireless Air Gunner attached to 108 RAF bomber squadron stationed near Cairo. He made numerous night bombing raids during the long North African campaign.

Later he joined 267 RAF transport squadron serving widely-separated bases in North and West Africa.

After 2 1/2 years in Africa he moved to Bari, Italy, a more convenient site for supplying Yugoslavian Partisans and flying out the wounded. These operations were escorted by fighter planes.

Stan, who joined the RCAF in 1940, spent the last year of his service career as an instructor at Comox, B.C.



*Rear turret of a B-24 aircraft.*

## Jim Sproat served Coastal Command

Coastal Command played an important part in protecting ship convoys from submarines.

Jim Sproat served as a Wireless Air Gunner from 1943 until 1945 at Yarmouth, N.S. and Torbay, Newfoundland.

Coastal Command aircrews provided cover for convoys from daylight until dark; this often meant 12-hour days for Jim and his crew mates. Mostly they would be flying close to the convoy but occasionally they would be sent 100 miles or so ahead to "scout."

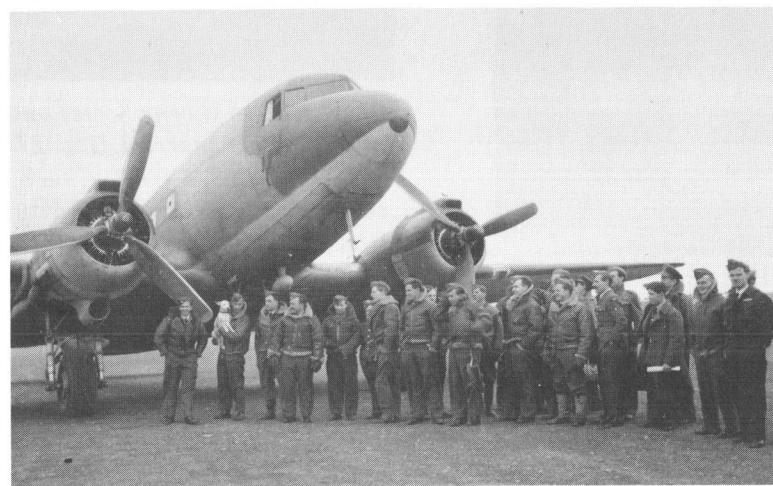
Jim says the main purpose was to keep submarines below the surface to restrict their speed and prevent them from firing torpedoes.

Many Coastal Command stations operated across the North Atlantic to provide ocean-wide air support of the convoys. These included bases in the Maritimes, Newfoundland, Iceland, the Azores and Britain.

Although he made scores of flights, Jim saw only one submarine. It surfaced immediately below his plane, which was at 5,000 feet. By the time the aircraft had reached sea level the submarine had long since disappeared below the surface.



*Flying Officer Doug Sproat, left and Sergeant Jim Sproat at Moose Jaw railway station.*



*DC 3 crews 267 Squadron RCAF at Bari, Italy, April 1944.*



*Canso aircraft.*



## *Every part of Canada was enriched by the arrival of thousands of war brides*



*John Brown (RCAF) and Marjorie Marks were married in July, 1945 at Bridgwater, Somerset. Marjorie came to Milton in July, 1946 with their infant daughter, Susan.*



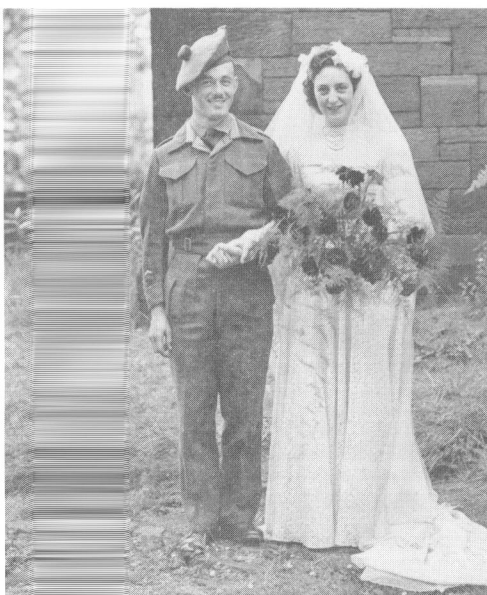
*Ed Jones (Provost Corps) and Eileen Yates were married April 17, 1945 in Manchester. A year later Eileen reached Milton after a ten-day voyage with thousands of other war brides in the Canadian Hospital Ship Letitia.*



*Gwen Bailey and Charlie Mills (Lorne Scots) were married June 19, 1943 at Kingston-on-Thames, Surrey. Gwen arrived in Milton, July, 1946 with their daughter.*



*Charlie Jones (Lorne Scots) and Mary Walker married Dec. 27, 1941 in Rehill, Surrey. Charlie served six years overseas. Mary, who sailed in the Queen Mary, arrived here in May, 1946.*



Jack Arnold (Lorne Scots) and  
Mavis Mowatt married in 1945 in  
Cheshire County (Merseyside).  
Mavis, delayed on medical advice,  
came here in 1947, one of the last  
war brides to arrive.



Art Charlton and Molly Allsopp  
married Oct. 26, 1941 at East  
Rudham, Norfolk. In the Royal  
Canadian Regiment, Art was cap-  
tured at Dieppe in August, 1942  
and spent the remainder of the war  
in prison camp. Molly arrived here  
in 1946 with their three-year-old  
daughter, Jennifer.



Bob Murdock married Ellen Keen  
at St. Philomena's Church,  
Glasgow, July 10, 1945. Three  
days later Bob was presented with  
the Military Medal at Buckingham  
Palace. He served with The New  
Brunswick Tank Regiment.

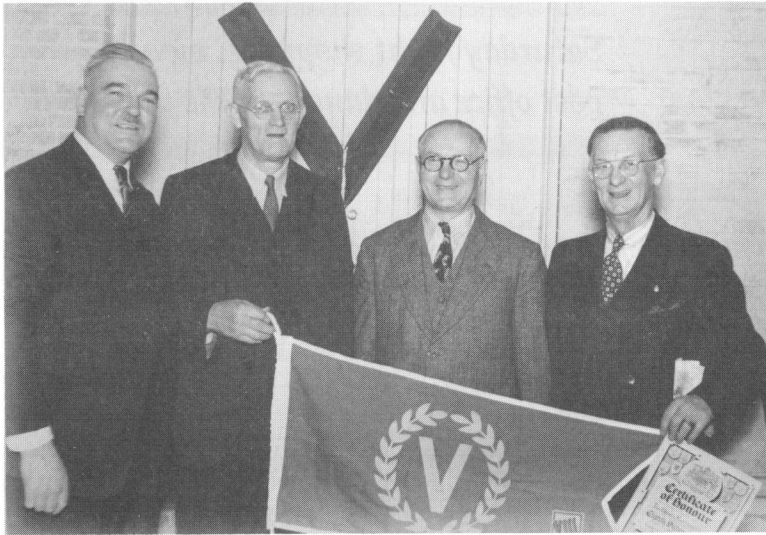
Gordon Hadley married  
Dorothy Watson of St.  
John's, Newfoundland  
April 6, 1946 at the  
United Church  
Parsonage in Milton.  
Gordon was in the  
Motor Transport  
Service.



Eric Merkley (Medical  
Corps) and Sylvia  
Frowen met May 8,  
1945 at a V-E Day  
party. They were mar-  
ried April 20 the follow-  
ing year in London.



## *My recollections of the war years*



*Just after V-E Day Model Knitting Mills employees received a banner for their participation in the Eighth Victory Loan campaign. From left: Chairman Adam Armstrong, Wm. Gamble plant superintendent, Sam Smith owner and salesman L. Servos.*

# Community Scrapbook



*Active workers for the local Red Cross included, in front, Mrs. R.M. Clements, and Mrs. Gordon McKenzie. Standing Mrs. Fred Dewar, Mrs. Jake Johnson, unidentified, Laura Chisholm and Doris Wood.*

On the home front daily living continued, dominated by news of the Milton "boys" or "girls" in the service. Rationing, giving blood, collecting scrap, knitting for the Red Cross, raising funds to send packages overseas and buying Victory Bonds and War Savings Certificates were activities. Some of the stories that touched the community follow.



## Main St. was the centre of activity in Milton during the 1940s

**M**ORE THAN 500 LEFT MILTON AND DISTRICT to fight battles throughout the world. What kind of town did they leave? What changes did war bring at home?

Milton's population has increased about ten times since the war. Urban Milton - the central area, not the vastly larger regional town created in 1974 - today has about 20,000 residents. The 1941 census listed 1,964.

People lived between Bronte and Ontario Streets; the fairgrounds were at the southern edge of the community and few people lived north of Woodward Avenue.

Main Street really deserved the name: it was the business and social centre. There was nowhere else to shop, to eat out or receive mail.

*The buildings in this section of Main St. have all disappeared since the war years.*



*Saturday night shopping, movies, post office and dances in the town hall.*

Bruce Street School, the present site of Milton Public Library, was the only elementary school in Town. The High School at Martin and Woodward (now an elementary school) educated students from both the town and rural areas, further strengthening ties in an already close-knit community.

No out-of-towner could escape detection on Main Street. Most people, of course, weren't looking for strangers. They were too busy meeting friends and catching up on gossip.

Before the war and for years afterwards, weekend shoppers swarmed the sidewalks. Many took in a Saturday movie at the theatre before shopping. Stores stayed open until 10 p.m., although not all storekeepers appreciated the "privilege".

Before and during the war Main Street was also the focus throughout the week. The town hall/library, two hotels and restaurants were all there. And of course the post office at Martin and Main was tremendously popular; many would walk three times a day to pick up mail periodically delivered by CNR and CPR trains.

Just a few yards off Main Street in the mid-1940s were the private hospital on Martin St., the Court House on Brown St. and railway stations at Court and Bronte Sts.

That compressed Milton is what lives in the hearts of long-time residents. It burns through the modern overlay of shopping malls, commuter station, regional government and the Greater Toronto Area.

### Wartime Changes

Wartime brought drastic changes to social life, especially for young women. Eileen (Grenke) Martin well remembers those days.

"At the beginning of the war," she writes, "there was quite an active social life for young people. In the winter there was skating on the pond and also at the Milton Arena on Brown Street (now the Post Office site), especially on Saturday nights when it was crowded.

"We also attended shows at the movie house where I believe there were three different movies a week.

"We walked a lot and Sunday afternoons were usually spent in walking around the pond, although you couldn't go completely around as now. We went for hikes up the mountain and took picnics.

"In the winter we skied. There seemed to be much more snow then than in these later years. We used to ski down the slopes behind Hawthorne Lodge (Tremaine Road, north of Derry).

"We could go across the fields to Tremaine Road, cross it and then go up the slopes. For the boys in town there was hockey in the winter and baseball in the summer.

"On Saturday night our favourite haunts after the show or skating were Barnard's for ice cream treats or Arnold's Fish and Chips, across Main Street. Barnard's was beside the present Bi-Way store.

"We gathered in homes frequently for singing around the piano. Not many of the young men had cars of their own.

"Beginning in May we used to go dancing at Huttonville Park (Mississauga Road, north of Steeles) – two or three carloads of people – when the boys could borrow cars. There was a dance hall there, covered but the sides of the building were screened in. We had wonderful times dancing to a good orchestra.

"There were quite a group of us boys and girls and, though we usually went in couples, if someone didn't have a date we could usually find another to make a couple so that we could all go together.

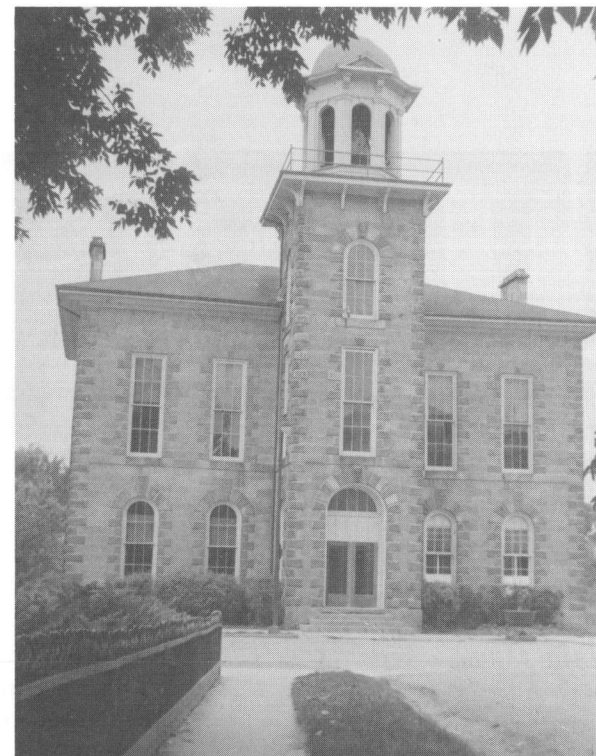
"The summer of 1940 was really a special one! During that year the boys would gradually sign up for one of the services until they were all away. However, there were weekends when they could be home on leave and we could still go out.

"By the end of 1941 there were very few young men not in the services except for some of the farm boys who were needed to produce the food and the odd one who was in essential work at P.L.'s and exempt.

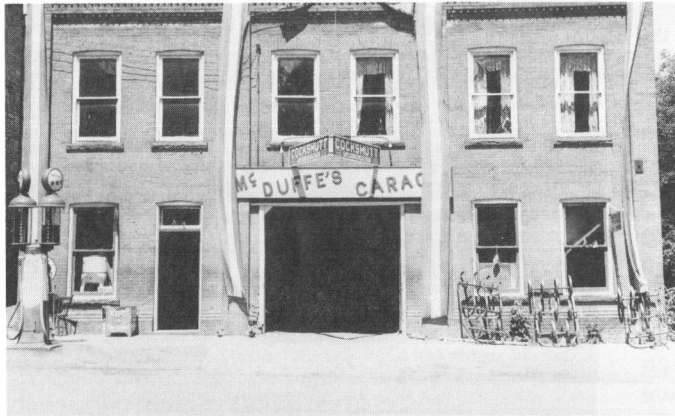
"The girls then had to follow other pursuits – going to the show, working for the Red Cross, joining CATS (Canadian Auxiliary Territorial Service), knitting socks and sweaters, packing parcels for overseas and writing dozens of letters!

"When the arena was closed and used for (wool) storage, we skated on the tennis courts (now the Credit Union Block). We went on hikes in the summer – girls only. We attended meetings of the Earl of Glamis Junior IODE chapter and helped with all sorts of fund-raisers for various organizations.

"The 4Teen Club (girls who worked in the offices at P.L.



*Milton Town Hall served as the library and also the site of social events in the large auditorium upstairs.*



*McDuffe's Garage was one of the Main St. buildings in the 1940s Milton.*

Robertson) put on dances in the old town hall and donated proceeds to war work. We listened to the radio a great deal and wore paths to the post office for mail," Eileen remembers.

#### **Commandoes to the Rescue**

Historically wartime means good times for farmers. And that was true in the Second World War, financially at any rate. Net income of Canadian farmers rose from \$534 million in 1940 to about

\$973 million in 1943.

But that's not what many farmers remember. They recall the desperate need for help. And the frustrations of getting government permission to buy essential farm equipment.

"Truckloads of men would come out from Toronto, many from the big department stores," says Ad Woodley. "They were known as 'commandoes'. We were glad to get them although some hardly knew one end of a cow from the other. We would give them supper before they went home. Pay was \$3 a day.

"We also got help from employees at P.L. Robertson. They would come about 3 p.m. and work until dark."

High school students chipped in, too. Ray Waters remembers picking potatoes at the Bousfield farm on Derry Road. He went for a day, stayed a week and developed a new respect for the rigours of farm work.

Farmers, however, didn't have much respect for government controllers.

"We had the impression that some of the people making decisions (about farm implements) didn't know much about farming," Ad says.

"I remember a local farmer who had applied to buy a manure-spreader. The official wanted to know why he would need such equipment.

"The exasperated farmer replied that he needed it so that he could get to church on Sunday. He got the allocation."

#### **Local Industry**

The P.L. Robertson plant played a key role, as it had in the First World War. Although it did not produce shell casings, as it had a generation earlier, its entire output of screws, bolts, nuts and screw drivers was geared to the war effort. The all-wood Mosquito bomber, for example, needed vast amounts of brass screws. So did many small naval vessels.

The plant – its employees were rated essential workers with appropriate exemptions from the armed services – worked around the clock. Wartime employment was about 150, or approximately one third of the plant's peak force in the 1950s.

"P.L." himself put in demanding hours, although he took a few minutes here and there to discuss spiritualism, philosophy (especially Voltaire), the world gold standard, or other of his varied interests.

The textile venture put together by bustling entrepreneur Sam Smith was another thriving operation. More than 100 men and women in four buildings spun woollen yarn, dyed it and produced socks and cardigan jackets. These plants, too, operated night and day.

Two brickyards north of town together employed up to 100. Although little construction was done in this area, bricks were trucked to Toronto, Peterborough, Windsor, Elliot Lake and other centres. Cy Hilson founded a transport business to help in the distribution.

The lime operation, also on the escarpment, at Kelso, employed about 25.

Many women in the district, as elsewhere, worked outside the home for the first time. Some like Peggy Reid, who took a job in a small electrical plant in Acton, found jobs close at hand. Others took a job-bus to Malton or roomed in Toronto during the week. These were new horizons and the pay was good.

Because of the almost total concentration on war production civilians had to "make do". As it happened, Peggy Reid says, this was not new for most people thanks to the terrible depression of the 1930s.

Support for the armed services, especially those overseas, was intense. In a few instances people were so committed that they sent white feathers – the traditional symbol of cowardice – to those who had not enlisted.

But the vast majority of people wanted to reach out, not only to those at war but also to those mourning at home. In small wartime Milton a death in battle brought sadness to the entire community.

The spirit of the time is well illustrated by excerpts from *The Canadian Champion*. The following items appeared in a September, 1944 issue.

- A community memorial service at Grace Church was held under the auspices of Branch 136, Canadian Legion in honour of local boys "who have paid the supreme sacri-

fice." A wreath was laid at the cenotaph; the Lorne Scots band took part.

- The Canadian Club couldn't hold a Friday evening meeting at the Milton Inn owing to restrictions and a shortage of staff. Instead the meeting would be at Milton High School. Speaker: Dr. G. I. Christie, President, Ontario Agricultural College, Guelph.

- The Women's Auxiliary at St. George's Church, Lowville, was holding a euchre and dance in aid of the Soldiers' Fund. Bennett's orchestra was playing at the Limestone school house (Derry Road). Admission 35c.

- A Navy League tag day on a Saturday raised \$93.67.
- Because of a growing school population two new teachers were being hired, one each at Bruce Street School and the High School.

- Advertised prices: bread two loaves for 15¢; grapefruit three for 25¢; tea 8 oz. 38¢; celery stalk 10¢. The Milton Hospital advertised rates of \$3.50 a day semi-private; \$5 private "in advance".

- This good word from Donald Gordon,

*At Milton Private Hospital rates for semi-private accommodation were \$3.50 a day.*







*The Gowland house at the corner of Main and Charles was a prominent Main St. feature.*

head of the Wartime Prices Board: "There is no reason for pessimism. The people of Canada have demonstrated that they have the skill, the brain and the brawn to tackle any situation which destiny may have in store for our country."

• Dr. C. K. Stevenson, Physician and Surgeon, had a long day. He had office hours 8:30 to 9 a.m.;

1-3; 7-9 p.m. He advertised himself as "Coroner, CPR and Gaol Surgeon."

• The editor appealed to farmers to take jobs in Ontario's 13 packing plants to help with an expected two billion pounds of meat (an increase of 40% over 1943).

• The Bell Telephone called on the public to "keep our calls just as short and business-like as we can." And Canada Coach Lines pleaded, "Don't blame your bus driver. It's not his fault if the bus is late or crowded."

• Nassagaweya's Busy Bees Club was sending 1,000 cigarettes a month to each local overseas serviceman.

• Edward G. Robinson and Lynn Bari were starring in "Tampico" at the Princess Theatre.

• The WRENS (Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service) had reached a strength of 5,000.

• People were reminded to send their Christmas

parcels early. Twelve million pounds of parcels were sent overseas in 1943.

• The Canadian Army was sending thousands of books to Canadian prisoners-of-war. Many prisoners were reportedly asking for "food for thought."

• No domestic refrigerators were being manufactured – the 225 in stock were being held for hospitals.

• Butter was getting scarce – The Prices Board postponed the due date of the ration coupon.

## *Remember how it was?*

How many places of business do you remember from the 1940s along Milton's Main Street? Sisters Eileen Martin, Audrey Brush and Dawn Crawford, their brother Murray Grenke and his wife, Donna, put their heads together to produce this list of commerce in the early 1940s.

We begin at the 'lower hotel' operated by the Kennedy family and now the Waltzing Weasel. There was a beer parlour where girls never went but good meals were available in a respectable hotel.

Adams Coal, Feed and Seed store. Our mother worked there from about 1942 until retirement.

Day's Hardware

Hydro office

Turner's Furniture store and Funeral Parlour. Bruce MacNab's father, Gordon, worked there as did Bruce after the war. They owned the business after the death of Mr. Turner.

Across the street where Canada Trust is now, the whole block was the Dr. Gowland residence back to Mary Street.

Bank of Nova Scotia  
Middleton's grocery  
Maher Shoe Store  
Cora Perry - grocery  
Randell & Morley butcher shop  
Shepherd's Bakery  
Dominion Store  
Pickett's Drug Store  
Marchand's Jewelry and China  
Fitzgerald Insurance  
Fred Mills Men's Wear  
Kerr's Drug Store  
Little's Harness Shop  
Anderson's Barber Shop  
Bus Knight's Men's Wear  
Galbraith's Men's Wear  
The Walker Store, dry goods  
*An alleyway*  
Bank of Toronto  
Selrite Store  
Barnard's Ice Cream and Confectionery  
Toletzka's Pool Room  
Chinese Laundry

Ramshaw Insurance  
Clement Paint & Paper  
Carroll's Store - grocery  
Knox Presbyterian Church  
*An alleyway*  
Restivo's Fruit and Grocery  
Jack Mountain's Barber Shop  
Princess Theatre  
Co-op  
Fay's Plumbing and Heating  
Cavell's Garage  
Gordon McLellan's butcher shop  
Coulson's Bakery  
Milton Inn

*Crossing the street to the north side we find:*

Cunningham's Grocery  
Ross Pearen's Photographic Studio  
Bank of Commerce  
Andy Elliott's barber shop  
Farmers' Building with apartments  
Johnny Mark's National Cafe  
McDuffe's Garage  
Sam Smith's mill  
T. A. Hutchinson, lawyer  
Canadian Champion  
Bell Telephone office

Arnold's Fish and Chips  
Metcalf's Garage  
Crozier Men's Wear  
Galloway's Butcher Shop  
Tom Dear's Shoe Store  
Milton Hardware, G. C. Gowland  
Post Office  
Town Hall  
Higgins Garage

On Martin St. Johnson's Garage was just up from Main, behind the post office. Dr. Stevenson's residence, office and private hospital were next.

*Johnson's Garage on Martin St. back of Milton Post Office. Frank Johnson is at the gas pumps.*



## Hundreds of stories tell of local families

Literally hundreds of wartime newspaper stories told of what was happening to Milton families. Here are some of them:

- F/O William Hill suffered burns while rescuing crew members from a burning plane.



Bill Hill

Bill served three years in the RCAF. He was born here and educated at Milton Heights and Milton High School. He died in a Pennsylvania traffic accident about ten years after the war.



F/O Ralph Merkley is shown with his sister Ruth on left and Joyce Law on the right.

- F/O Ralph Merkley was a crew member of a

### ... from Milton's Scrapbook

Sunderland Flying Boat that attacked a German submarine in the Irish Sea just before V-E Day. It was one of the last anti-submarine strikes in the war.

- In the closing days of the war three Milton soldiers were reported freed from prisoner-of-war camps. George Williams and Roy Forbes had been captured at Dieppe in 1942. Charlie Auger was wounded and taken prisoner in Belgium in September, 1944.

- Pte. Mike Coxe returned home to recover from the effects of being buried 15 hours in a demolished building in France. Two of his

brothers, William and Ken, died in the war.

- Captain K.Y. Dick and Tpr. J. J. Morley returned to Milton after being wounded in 1944. Pte. Reginald Gray came home after suffering wounds in Germany.

- In Germany Spr. Ross Maxwell who had served five years without injury, suffered shrapnel wounds to his right leg and foot May 8 in Germany, the last day of fighting.



Three Wilson brothers served in the Army. Above Merv and Les. Marshall (Bus) died in England in an accident in August 1945.



At Milton's Court St. station Ralph Merkley, Joe Galloway, Don MacNabb and Bill Hill met in the spring of 1944.

- Flight Lt. Charles Prosser was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross overseas.

- L/Cpl. Stanley Dent and L/Cpl. John Dent won the Military Medal for gallantry in action in Italy.

- Brigadier F. M. Lott of the Canadian Dental Corps was awarded the Canadian Efficiency decoration.

... from  
*Milton's  
Scrapbook*

- Pte. Donald Timbers married Rosemary Bowring of the Canadian Auxiliary Territorial Service in Grace Anglican Church. Both bride and groom were in uniform for Milton's first wartime military wedding. Rosemary later joined the RCAF and took wireless training in Montreal. She served in the Coastal Command, Gander.

- Sergeant E. G. Turner returned on leave; wounded in France he spent several months in hospital in England.

- Pilot Officer Joe Galloway arrived home with his wife Sheila and daughter Jo Ann, two days before the youngster's birthday. He was awarded the DFM for performing with "outstanding skill" as a wireless operator air gunner.



*The Milton CATS group is shown. In front, Millie Evans, Glenna Pearen, Helen Varley, Mrs. Bowring, Helen Barnard, Fannie Evans, June Cooper. In the back Marie Turner, Jean Blinco, Joan Graham, Lil Maskell, Yatta Irwin and Rosie Timbers.*

*Women would be ready for any enemy action  
according to demonstration in Milton*

Many Milton women trained hard to be ready to defend their town against bombing or other enemy action.

They formed a local detachment of the Canadian Auxiliary Territorial Service, a group everyone knew as

CATS. Elsie Bowring, the commanding officer, soon had dozens of volunteers. Recruiting one evening at a downtown store, she signed up every shopper.

Training included signaling (flags), first aid, anti-gas measures, mapping, air

raid precautions and rifle drill; some became expert shots.

Their work was well publicized: in its May 23, 1942 edition Saturday Night magazine devoted two pages and 14 photographs to the CATS in Milton. The article described how the women performed during a mock bombing raid on Milton and the buildings used.

They set up emergency headquarters and a hospital in the Town Hall. They donned gas masks to rescue victims from a bombed building; Helen, 10, was treated for a broken arm. They evacuated children from the downtown area.

At Bruce Street School principal Edgar Foster cleared all the children from the building in 90 seconds.

After the "all clear" CATS members "decontaminated" the Martin-Main intersection.

Many of the CATS members later joined the armed services.





*Because he became ill, RCAF flying student John Brown could not attend wings parade. As the honour student he was entitled to receive his wings first. At Hagersville he got his wings from Group Captain Dave Harding, former football star, who was commanding officer.*

### **Red Cross Busy**

The Milton branch of the Red Cross shipped more than 1600 articles during the first two months of 1944. In addition, the branch sent out 7,200 surgical dressings.

- L/Cpl. George Smillie was welcomed home after more than five years overseas.

- Pte. Arthur Perry was reported seriously ill while serving in Holland.

- Sergeant Fred Robbins returned home still wearing a leg cast. He stepped on a land mine during the fighting in Germany.

- Bdr. Murray Ezeard was home just a few weeks when he departed to play hockey for the Baltimore Orioles. He served three years overseas with Conn Smythe's 30th Battalion.

- A news report from the "Adriatic Front" told of house-to-house fighting at Coriano, Italy. Sergeant Ken (Dick) Clement and his platoon captured ten soldiers in one building. Dick's unit, The Irish Regiment of Canada, suffered heavy losses.

- Sergeant William Hill, RCAF, and Geraldine Overton of Selma, Virginia, were married in Grace Anglican Church.

- Flight Sergeant Duncan MacArthur and Leading Airwoman Betty Winter, Toronto, were married in St. Martin's Church, England. Both were in uniform.

- Pte. Art Cooper wrote to The Canadian Champion thanking the newspaper for sending him a copy each week. Art was serving in London with the Lorne Scots Detachment, No. 1 Canadian General Reinforcement unit.



*Pete Blinco, left, Army Medical Corps, and Grant Fraser, rear-gunner, who served in Coastal Command operations in England and Scotland.*

## *Military Cross awarded to Capt. W. R. Dalziel*

Captain William Dalziel of the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps was recognized for rescuing a soldier under extremely hazardous conditions.

The citation accompanying the award of the Military Cross, described the rescue in the early evening of May 30, 1944. It took place in the Ceccano-Pofi region of Italy.

A tractor and a gun of an artillery regiment had suffered a direct hit. Three men had been rescued but two others had been left at the side of the tractor because of flames, exploding ammunition and heavy fire.

"Despite warnings regarding the danger of exploding mines and ammunition, Captain Dalziel and an unknown soldier, with absolute disregard for their own safety, carried a stretcher to the tractor where they found one man still alive," the citation states. "They rolled off his clothing and

carried him to the road where the jeep ambulance was waiting.

"The nearby ammunition tractor suffered a direct hit and exploding ammunition showered the area with debris."

Capt. Dalziel's coolness and determination were "in keeping with the highest tradition of the medical services."

*... from  
Milton's  
Scrapbook*

- Major Rev. Gray Eakins was appointed rector of Grace Anglican Church. The appointment came after more than five years overseas as padre of the Royal Regiment of Canada. In the First World War Rev. Eakins served as a gunner and signaler with the 18th Battery.

## *An unlucky pig*

Robert Tonelli, on returning home, told of unusual and hair-raising experiences in France. Following the invasion, Army kitchens couldn't keep up with the advance. When hungry soldiers spotted an unlucky pig, one of them shot it. All his buddies rushed in to take a slice of pork.

Later Robert was part of a much grimmer scene. A German officer came out of a hedgerow holding a white flag. As a Canadian officer, carrying a primed hand grenade, went forward to take him prisoner, a hidden



*Pte. Robert Tonelli*

German shot the Canadian. But he still managed to toss his grenade into the hedgerow. When the smoke cleared, Robert reported, the Canadians found three dead

- Bernice Sim had a rare position with the Canadian Navy. She was one of two WRENS operating Navy harbour craft.

- Warrant Officer John McTrach was reported missing during operations over "enemy territory." John trained as an observer with the RCAF.

- Sergeant Pilot Ronald Jamieson was injured while over "enemy territory."

- Flight Lieutenant Ken Marshall and "Billie" Dick were married in Knox Church.

- Sergeant William Childs, Lorne Scots overseas, was awarded the Canadian Efficiency Medal.



Flight Lieutenant Gordon Porter joined the RCAF in 1940 while minister of St. Paul's United Church, Milton. As a chaplain in Britain Rev. Porter ministered to airmen over a huge area extending from northern England to the Shetland Islands, off the tip of Scotland. When the war ended he returned to St. Paul's, remaining until 1948.

- Private Helen Paupst, in Holland with the Canadian Army, and Pte. Orval Varley, with Canadian occupation forces in Germany, were married in Amsterdam.

- Arthur Smith arrived safely in England May 8, 1945, after more than four years in a prison camp. He had been held at a camp for Naval and Merchant seamen near Bremen. He was freed April 28 by the British 2nd Army.

- William Randell, RCNVR, and Norma Marcellus were married at the bride's home in Milton.

... from  
*Milton's  
Scrapbook*

- Signaler Allan Marcellus arrived home to tell of an almost-miraculous escape from death in the Atlantic. After his ship, HMCS Esquimalt was sunk by a torpedo, Allan balanced on a wooden shaft linking two floats, well below the sea surface. Both legs were frozen when he was picked up six hours after the sink-

ing. It took many weeks for him to recover. Several sailors died during the ordeal. Luckily, he said, it was a calm sea otherwise they likely could not have survived from daybreak until rescue at noon.

- At the tenth blood donor clinic in Milton during the war 116 persons gave blood. Names of all donors were listed in *The Canadian Champion*. The clinic was held at the Canadian Legion hall.



Flight Lieutenant Bruce MacNab, right, four-year veteran of the RCAF, returned to Milton on a Victory Loan drive. His first sale was to Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Coxe. Four of their sons joined up; two of them, William and Kenneth Jr., were killed in action



## Many recall the prank that got out of control

What started out as a youthful prank in the first year of the war ended as a case for the R.C.M.P.

At the time teen-age soldiers, Lorne Scots, were guarding the Martin Street armoury (now the CAW union hall). Friends decided to give their soldier pals some excitement.

Relying on a do-it-yourself book and a home chemistry set, they concocted some fireworks guaranteed to make a lot of noise. They tied five or six in sequence to a fence near the armoury, lit the fuse and strolled down Martin Street. They heard a series of distinct "bangs" and were satisfied they had pulled off an interesting stunt.

But somehow the incident took on a life of its own. Soon it became a plot to blow up the armoury; it

became a prominent item on radio newscasts.

The R.C.M.P. were called in and soon got their "men". They detained two youths a couple of hours for questioning but no charges were laid.

### *... from Milton's Scrapbook*

- Serving with the Provost Corps in Holland, Ed Jones was struck by the power of food habits.

Canadian soldiers were surprised that the Dutch people, although terribly hungry, didn't seem to be eating corn. And there was plenty of it in the fields.

Ed's unit did its best to show the Dutch why corn on



*David Brush meets a farmer going to market in the Azores. Winds on the islands flattened David's tent and made him envy the "palatial" surroundings enjoyed by U.S. forces there. Flying Officer Brush, a Wireless Air Gunner, served more than two years overseas on Coastal Command attached to 269 RAF Squadron.*

the cob is considered such a treat in this country.

- The first Milton man to join the RCAF and the first to go overseas, Flight Sergeant Duncan McArthur, returned home. He enlisted April 1, 1940 and went overseas five months later.

- Corp. Frederick (Bin) Cannon was reported missing in France. In addition to the official Army notification, his family received a letter from Bus Norrington stating that Frederick had been seen being taken prisoner.



- **George Fraser**, teacher at Bruce St. School before the war and a Hamilton principal afterwards, served in RCAF wireless operations.



- **Pte. George Thompson**, **Tpr. Frank Morley**, **Pte. E.E. Zimmerman** and **Pte. Delbert Snow** were reported wounded in Italy.

- **Mavis Arnold** is a staunch Canadian. But as a war bride she didn't always feel that everything was sweetness and light. Sometimes, she says, new arrivals were given the impression that they had "stolen" local "eligibles."

- The **Dionne quintuplets** were made honorary members of the Royal Canadian Navy. They were reported writing letters to lonely sailors and putting their money into war savings certificates. The Navy League of Canada gave the girls sailor uniforms.

- Both in uniform, **Lieutenant Sidney Dick**, **RCNVR**, and **Nursing Sister Doris Sherwood**, **RCN**, were married in King's Chapel, Halifax.

- **Captain Kenneth Dick**, **Second Tank Corps**, was wounded in France. After losing his tank he was riding in an Army car when it overturned. One of the passengers required first aid and Kenneth removed his helmet to get bandages carried there. That's when he was struck by shrapnel.



*This local group includes Andy Graham, Duncan Patterson, Jack Charlton, Bill Noble and Hughie Evans.*

## *Strange travels for wartime shipment*

In the early years of the war **P.L. Robertson Mfg. Co.** made a shipment of brass screws to the Far East.

They didn't arrive and eventually the company collected the insurance.

Seven years after shipment the screws turned up on a dock in San Francisco. What happened?

*... from*

## *Milton's Scrapbook*

- **Major F.W.B. Fitzgerald** came home after five years overseas. While he was away his wife operated the real estate and insurance business in town.

- **Pte. Reginald Gray** was reported wounded in Germany. He was serving with the **Hamilton Light Infantry**.

The company learned that the screws were crossing the Pacific when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour. The Americans immediately took over merchant ships and put the original cargoes in storage. That's where the screws presumably stayed until someone contacted the company in 1948.

**P.L.** was invited to buy back the shipment but declined.



*Stan Randell joined the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps in August 1942. He took with him his trade as a butcher.*



*For many Miltonians aircraft manufacturer A.V. Roe offered good-paying jobs. The company provided bus transportation to the Malton plant. Here the staff gathers in celebration marking completion of the 100th Lancaster Bomber. Norma Kitchen is the ninth person on the right wing.*

- The Milton branch, Canadian Legion, honoured 24 Milton members of the Lorne Scots on their last leave. Mayor Armstrong read a farewell address to the men, each of whom received a gift before departing for their barracks in Hamilton.

- Fourth Line Red Cross workers were busy in 1943. They made five men's shirts, six pairs of seamen's socks, eight pairs of ordinary socks, 38 children's dresses, eight girls gowns and 38 quilts.

- When the war ended in Europe Mayor George Dawson proclaimed a holi-

day. Schools closed and the youngsters crowded the streets. Cars picked them up and drove through town with horns blasting. Some stores closed, others remained open. A variety sale and tea at the Red Cross carried on.

At 7 p.m. the Lorne

Scots' band led a parade to the cenotaph. The High School Cadets took a prominent role; others were the Firemen, First World War veterans; Boy Scouts and Cubs, and many individuals young and old.

From the Cenotaph the people proceeded to Knox Presbyterian Church for a service of thanksgiving. All three ministers from Knox, St. Paul's and Grace Church took part. The church was crowded. Afterwards many gathered at Martin's flats (Rotary Park) for a fireworks display. The celebration ended with a dance at the Town Hall.

*... from*  
**Milton's**  
**Scrapbook**

- The people of Es-quesing Township (Ward 1) gave returning servicemen a royal welcome. Watches and

chains and rings were presented to John Brown, Gerald Carton, Robert Clark, Reg Corps, Robert Currie, Keith Durnan, Fred Gallagher, Reg Greg, Mervin Hearn, William Hill, Gordon Hilson, Jackie Hilson, Garnet Howden, Howell Hopkin, Stanley Marsh, Ken Marshall, Calvin McDonald, Peter McGibbon, Martin McLauchlin, James Murray,

Ken Peddie, Fred Robinson, Stan Wilson and Wellington Wilson.

Murray Sproat made the presentations. He also presented a clock to Edwin Harrop, father of David Harrop who was killed in the war. Two minutes silence was observed in honour of David.

In the evening the men were guests at a dance held in Milton Town Hall.



In August 1946 a Recognition Day was held honouring returned veterans. The Lorne Scots band headed the parade of floats to the fairgrounds, where speeches and presentations took place.

## *Hundreds on the train but Merv saw only one*

In 1942 Merv Wilson of the Provost Corps thought he was just arranging a weekend trip home. It turned out to be a lifelong journey.

Merv was patrolling a train from North Bay, where he was stationed, to Toronto. It was overflowing; every seat was taken when Gertie Lasseter boarded at Huntsville to return to her Army job in Toronto. Merv surrendered his place to help a fellow soldier.

When the train arrived at Union Station, Merv carried her bags out. Letters followed and the friendship blossomed.

Merv was on his way overseas in 1944 when he was seriously injured in a motorcycle accident at



Gertie Lasseter, left, and Merv Wilson were married May 27, 1944 at the Anglican rectory in Milton. Watching the cake-cutting are bridesmaid Shirley Hodge and Alice Wilson, Merv's mother.

Debert, Nova Scotia. Unconscious for six days and hospitalized for three months, he missed his overseas posting. Transferred to Toronto in February 1944, he lost no time in proposing.

Gertie and Merv were married in July in the Anglican rectory on Thomas Street in Milton. Gertie was discharged early in 1945 and Merv the following year.

... from  
*Milton's*  
*Scrapbook*



## *Fighter pilot lives through war but dies in peacetime crash*

Bob Cooke, who joined the RCAF early in the war, became a fighter pilot.

Although injured in a flying accident in England, he was healthy in time for the invasion of France.

On D-Day (June 6, 1944) he was flying a Spitfire; he

*... from  
Milton's  
Scrapbook*

• Soon after the war ended in Europe, owner **Sam Smith** of Model Knitting Mills sponsored a dinner and dance for his employees. They had reached 140 per cent of the Victory Loan objective. Three hundred attended. Sam said the "Nazi regime is as flat as a pancake. Let us imagine we are dancing on Hitler's grave."

later told his brother Alex, that the English Channel was so packed with ships and other vessels that he could have walked to France. Three or four days after the invasion started he was flying from wire-mesh landing strips on the French coast.

Bob continued flying after the war. As a civilian pilot (Kenting Aviation) in 1952 Bob pioneered the first regular helicopter mail service in Canada; based in Lewisporte Bob delivered mail to many Newfoundland fishing communities.

Six months later Bob made a flight to a hydro project in northern Quebec. His helicopter struck a hydro wire and plunged into the Bersimis River. Bob was killed.

• Sergeant **Ralph Gowland** was mentioned in dispatches for overseas service.



*Vern Grenke joined the army in 1942 on his 18th birthday. He served with the 8th Canadian RECCE Regiment in France, Belgium, Holland and Germany. Taken ill with tuberculosis at the end of the war, Vern spent five years in Canadian hospitals.*

• Pilot Officer **Ken Galloway**, an RCAF fighter pilot, was reported missing in Burma. But he found his way to safety. A year later, September 1944, he was reported a prisoner-of-war in Germany.

Ken returned home two months after the war in Europe ended

## *Tragedy strikes two Collis Clans*

A researcher trying to turn up an original photo of a Milton soldier killed in the war came upon a second tragedy to a family of the same name.

He was looking for a portrait of Sergeant **John A. Collis**. Instead the researcher made contact with George Collis, who came to Milton about 20 years ago from Britain.

George explained that his uncle, **Sid Collis**, had been killed April 10, 1940 in the battle of Narvik. And he produced a memorial photo showing the destroyer HMS Hunter and listing the names of more than 120 British sailors lost in the ship's sinking.

• The Wartime Prices and Trade Board in 1944 told farmers they could apply for extra rations to feed seasonal work crews. Limit was five meals for each crew member.





There was no shortage of men at this Air Force dance, which Jim Sproat believes was held in 1942 at the Moncton Supply Depot.

### Three brothers serve

Three Thomas brothers joined the services. **Pete**, below, was in the Infantry and the Provost Corps; **Don** joined the Army Service Corps. **Bill** was trained by the Canadian Navy for Defensively Equipped Marine Ships; he



Pete Thomas

manned guns aboard the U.S. oil tanker *Arlington Beach Park*. A fourth brother, **Orville**, was badly wounded in the First World War.

### Trays presented

The Town presented silver-plated serving trays to the families of those killed in the war.

The tray presented to the family of **Lorne Black** has been donated to the Milton Historical Society.

### Bring your own sugar

**Dorothy Watson** was taking no chances when she flew from St. John's in early 1946 to marry **Gord Hadley** in Milton.

Aware of the lingering wartime shortages, Dorothy carried her wedding cake as hand luggage. She also brought icing sugar. Coulson's Bake Shop on Main street did the cake decorating for the reception in Hamilton.

### What's going on?

**Ed Goodall** and his RAF classmates couldn't understand why their air training was called off on a very fine day in June 1944.

A few hours later they knew. Hundreds of aircraft – bombers fighters, gliders – and countless airborne troops took off from airfields near Ed's base at Little Risington, Oxfordshire.

Ed has never forgotten that spectacular D-Day scene.

## ... from Milton's Scrapbook

### Truly Busy Bees

Nassagaweya Busy Bees Club raised more than \$1500 in 1943; Brookville dances accounted for more than \$900.



Ed Goodall

# Those who served



*Among those serving was this first group of Lorne Scots to go overseas from Milton in June 1941. Back: Charles Pearson, Dunc Patterson, Art Cooper, Bill London, Frank Shannon. Second row: Dunc Timbers, Andy Graham, Elmer Zimmerman, Eddy Jones, Albert Downs, Lorne Black. Front: Harvey Brush, Hugh Evans, Chuck Gervais, John Arnold.*

Milton and district in 1939-1945 saw more than 500 men and women serving in Canada's armed forces. This was from a town population of under 2,000 and a total Halton population of under 30,000. Some found brides overseas, some found new careers, some returned to their home community and jobs. Some never returned to Milton.



# Those who served from Milton and district

Agnew, D. M.  
Agnew, K. D.  
Alexander, M. J.  
Allen, R. H.  
Ambrose, J. W.  
Anderson, A.  
Anderson, C. R.  
Anderson, J. L.  
Anderson, R. H.  
Andrews, H.  
Armstrong, J. J.  
Arnold, J. C.  
Asleton, A.  
Auger, A. G. \*  
Auger, C. J.  
Auger, H. J.  
Ball, E.  
Banner, F.  
Barton, J.  
Baylis, G.  
Baylis, H. P.  
Baynton, A.  
Baynton, E.  
Baynton, J.  
Beaty, H. L.

Beaty, W. H. \*  
Beavis, B.  
Beavis, F.  
Bill, F.  
Bill, G.  
Black, L. \*  
Black, M.  
Blinco, P.  
Bolingbroke, F.  
Bonus, M.  
Bousfield, H.  
Bowring, F. C. \*  
Bradley, R.  
Brash, F.  
Bridgman, H.  
Bridgman, V.  
Bridgman, W. C.  
Britton, A.  
Britton, E.  
Britton, G.  
Brown, J. F.  
Brush, D. C.  
Brush, G. G.  
Brush, K.  
Brush, R.

Brush, R. J.  
Brush, W. H.  
Bullen, W.  
Bundy, G.  
Burns, R. E.  
Bussell, J.  
Cahoun, V.  
Cameron, R.  
Campbell, C.  
Campbell, L.  
Campbell, R. C.  
Campbell, R. C.  
Cannon, F. V.  
Carton, G.  
Carton, L.  
Casarin, B.  
Chandler, C.  
Charlton, A.  
Charlton J. W.  
Charlton, P. A.  
Charlton R. G.  
Childs, F.  
Childs, W. A.  
Clarke, R. C.  
Clement, K. W.

*\* indicates killed in action*

Clement, W. H.  
Clements, H. C.  
Clements, J. \*  
Clements, M. C.  
Clements, N. B.  
Collins, A. C.  
Collins, M.  
Collis, J. \*  
Collis, L.  
Commons, R.  
Connors, R.  
Cooke, R. M.  
Cookman, A.  
Cookman, J. H.  
Cooper, R.  
Cooper, A. E.  
Copeland, H. G.  
Corbett, A. D.  
Corp, H. N.  
Corp, J.  
Corp, R.  
Corp, W.  
Coulson, A.  
Coulson, E. D.  
Coulson, G. A.

Coulson, H.  
Coulson, V.  
Coulter, M.  
Coxe, H. S.  
Coxe, J. L.  
Coxe, K. A. \*  
Coxe, W. A. \*  
Crawford, R. F.  
Cross, W. C.  
Currie, J.  
Currie, J.D.  
Currie, J. H.  
Currie, R.  
Dales, W. L.  
Dear, T.  
Dent, J. D.  
Dent, S.  
Deverell, E.  
Devlin, J. D.  
Dice, W.  
Dick, E. R.  
Dick, J. M.  
Dick, K. Y.  
Dick, S. A.  
Dixon, D.

Dillow, R.  
Dillow, W. \*  
Dolby, E. \*  
Dolby, H. M.  
Donovan, H.  
Donovan, M.  
Douglas, W. J.  
Downs, A. T.  
Downs, D. L.  
Downs, G. E.  
Downs, J.  
Dredge, C.  
Drew, G. B.  
Drew, J. E.  
Durnan, K.  
Early, C. R.  
Eden, H.  
Edwards, A.  
Edwards, F.  
Elliot, H.  
Elliot, R.  
Elsley, C.  
Elsley, C. \*  
Elsley, D.  
Elsley, O.

Ervin, B. D.  
Ervin, R.  
Esterbrook, J.  
Evans, H. L.  
Evans, L. M.  
Evans, M.  
Ezeard, H. \*  
Ezeard, J.  
Ezeard, M.  
Fay, C.  
Fay, M.  
Finney, R.  
Fitzgerald, F. W.  
Forbes, L.  
Forbes, R. J.  
Forbes, R. S.  
Ford, J. F.  
Ford, V. R. S.  
Fowles, T. G.  
Frank, C.  
Franklin, M.  
Fraser, G. R.  
Fraser, J. G.  
Fraser, W.  
French, G. V. \*





# Those who served from Milton and district

Galbraith, D.  
Galbraith, R. A.  
Galbraith, R. H. \*  
Galbraith, W. A.  
Gallagher, F. W.  
Galloway, J. E.  
Galloway, K. A.  
Gastle, H.  
Gastle, W. D.  
Gates, A.  
Gervais, C.  
Gibbons, J. \*  
Gibbons, W. J.  
Giddings, E. A.  
Giddings, M.  
Gilbert, E. H.  
Gilbert, J. A.  
Gilby, G.  
Gillis, K.  
Gleave, F.  
Gould, W. H.  
Gowland, M.  
Gowland, R. D.  
Graham, A.  
Graham, J. W.

Gray, D.  
Gray, L.  
Gray, R.  
Gray, R.  
Gregg, R.  
Grenke, V.  
Gullis, K.  
Gunby, J. C.  
Gunby, W. F.  
Hadley, G. E.  
Hamilton, F. I.  
Hamilton, G.  
Hamilton, L. J.  
Hamilton, M. L.  
Hamilton, W.  
Hamilton, W. E. C.  
Harbottle, M.  
Harris, C.  
Harrop, D. \*  
Hasselfeldt, G.  
Hearn, M. J.  
Henry, J. R.  
Herman, L.  
Higgins, J.  
Hill, J.

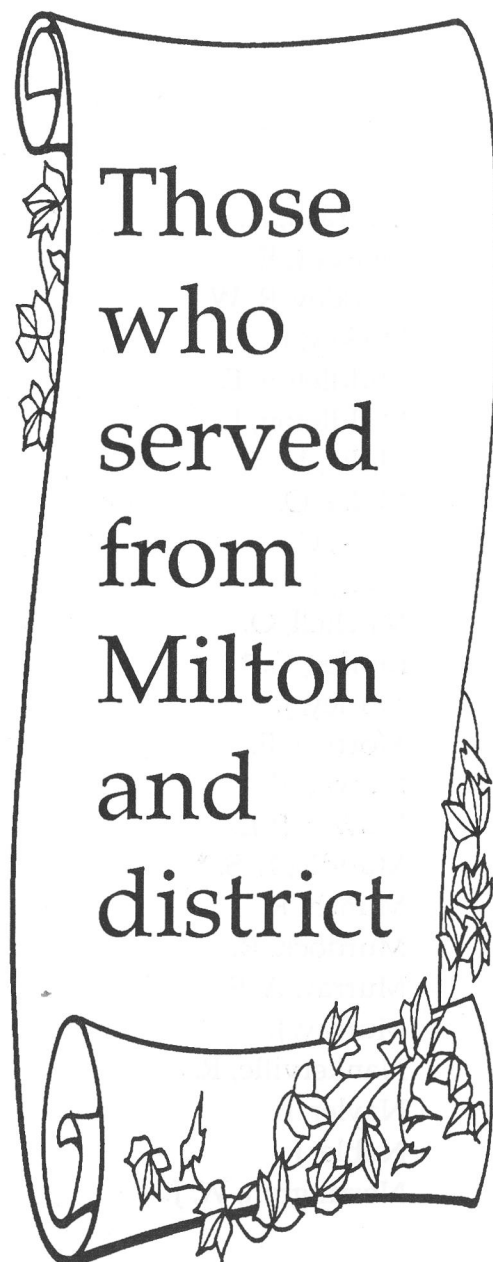
Hilson, G.  
Hilson, J.  
Holmes, J. H.  
Holmes, M. R.  
Homewood, C. V.  
Homewood, G.  
Hopkin, H.  
Hopkins, J.  
Howden, G.  
Hume, D. R.  
Hunter, R. J.  
Ingles, D.  
Inglis, J.  
Inman, W.  
Jameson, R. A.  
Jarrett, H.  
Javes, W. S.  
Jay, S.  
Jennings, W. B.  
Job, P.  
Johnson, F.  
Johnson, J.  
Johnston, D.  
Jones, C.  
Jones, E.

Kearns, L.  
Kelman, B.  
Kelman, C.  
Kelman, D. L.  
Kennedy, E.  
Kennedy, J.  
Kennedy, J. H.  
Kenney, J.  
King, E. R.  
King, K.  
King, L.  
Kitchen, H. B.  
Kitchen, J.  
Kitching, H.  
Laing, G.  
Laing, J.  
Laking, D.  
Laking, R.  
Lamb, W. G.  
Lambert, W. E.  
Land, A.  
Land, N.  
Lane, D.  
Little, R.  
London, C. W.

Lott, N. C.  
Lyle, E.  
Lyle, R.  
Mahon, E. C.  
Mahon, J. M.  
Mahon, R. K.  
Marcellus, A. R.  
Marks, J.  
Marks, W. H.  
Marsh, C.S.  
Marshall, G.  
Marshall, K. P.  
Martin, D.  
Martin, R.  
Mathies, L.  
Maxwell, R.  
MacArthur, C.  
MacArthur, D.  
MacArthur, T. J. \*  
MacNab, B. C.  
MacNabb, D. S. \*  
McCallum, J. A.  
McCandless, J.  
McDonald, K.  
McDougall, J. K.

McDuffe, A.  
McDuffe, M.  
McEachern, C.  
McEachern, G.  
McEachern, J.O.  
McGibbon, P.  
McGillvray, P.  
McHeough, R. T.  
McLaren, C. P. \*  
McLaughlin, M.  
McLean, A.  
McLean, D.  
McLean, D. H.  
McLean, J.  
McLean, T.  
McLean, W. R.  
McLellan, G. \*  
McLeod, G.  
McNiven, A. J.  
McPhail, D. E.  
McPhail, L. W.  
McPhail, R.  
McTrach, H.  
McTrach, J.  
McTrach, W.

McTrash, A.  
Merkley, E.  
Merkley, R. W.  
Mickey, K.  
Middleton, F.  
Middleton, L.  
Miller, H. T.  
Miller, O.  
Mills, C.  
Mills, J. \*  
Mitchell, O.  
Morley, G. \*  
Morley, J.  
Morrish, E.  
Mowat, P.  
Mowat, P. L.  
Muddle, L. S. \*  
Munch, R.  
Murdock, R.  
Murray, A. S.  
Murray, J.  
Nankerville, R.  
Nayler, L.  
Noble, J.  
Norrington, W. J.



# Those who served from Milton and district

Norris, H. C.  
Osczpala, E.  
Parsons, A. \*  
Parssinen, L.  
Paterson, D.  
Paterson, J.  
Paterson, T.  
Patterson, D.  
Patterson, G.  
Paupst, H. S.  
Pears, C.  
Pearson, C.  
Peddie, K.  
Peddie, T.  
Peers, J. B.  
Penson, G.  
Peppers, S.  
Perry, A. H.  
Perry, F.  
Pickersgill, P. B.  
Pickett, A.  
Pollard, K.  
Pollock, G.  
Porter, G. W.  
Powell, M.

Powell, R.  
Ramshaw, H.  
Randell, W. K.  
Randell, S. J.  
Reid, S.  
Reid, T.  
Robb, J.  
Robb, M.  
Robbins, F.  
Roberts, A.  
Roberts, H.  
Roberts, R.  
Robertson, D. P.  
Robertson, E. E.  
Robertson, H.  
Robertson, J. J. \*  
Robertson, J. K.  
Robertson, K. J.  
Robertson, R.  
Robertson, R.  
Robertson, S.  
Robertson, S. F.  
Robertson, W. S.  
Robin, S.  
Robinson, N.

Rush, C. L.  
Rusk, M. M.  
Sales, W.  
Sayers, C.W.  
Sclisizzi, E.  
Scott, W. D. \*  
Serafini, R.  
Service, S. R.  
Shannon, F.  
Shaw, J.  
Shea, A.  
Sherin, D.  
Sherin, W. J.  
Silver, J.  
Simpson, G. T.  
Sim, B.  
Slingsby, D.  
Smillie, C.  
Smillie, G. F.  
Smillie, S.  
Smith, A. W.  
Smith, C. E.  
Smith, H. D.  
Snow, T. D.  
Snow, W. O. \*

Snyder, J. E.  
Snyder, R.  
Spence, W. K.  
Sproat, A. M.  
Sproat, J. D.  
Stephenson, J. M.  
Storey, M.  
Stover, D.  
Stover, J. O.  
Stringer, F.  
Symons, F.  
Symons, T.  
Taylor, C.  
Teeple, I. \*  
Thomas, D.  
Thomas, P.  
Thomas, W. J.  
Thompson, E. L. S.  
Thompson, G.  
Thompson, G. R.  
Thomson, C. R.  
Thomson, R. E.  
Tickner, L.  
Tight, C.  
Tight, P.

Timbers, D.  
Timbers, M.  
Timbers, R. L.  
Timmer, D. M.  
Toletzka, E.  
Tonelli, E.  
Tonelli, E. A.  
Tonelli, R.  
Turner, C. O. \*  
Turner, D. E.  
Turner, J. W.  
Turner, E. G.  
Turner, R. B.  
Turvis, M.  
Twiss, G.  
Twiss, M.  
Urell, H.  
Van Sickle, O.  
Varley, R.  
Wall, C.  
Wallace, G.  
Wallace, H.  
Wallace, J.  
Wallace, N.  
Wallwork, R.

Walton, H. E.  
Warmington, J.  
Watson, R.  
Weller, F. \*  
Wetham, H.  
Whaley, R. O.  
Wheelband, L.  
White, C. A.  
White, J. T.  
White, V.  
Willet, G. E.  
Willett, H. K.  
Williams, G. A.  
Wilson, A.  
Wilson, A.  
Wilson, C.  
Wilson, D. A. \*  
Wilson, D. A.  
Wilson, E.  
Wilson, J.  
Wilson, L.  
Wilson, L. M.  
Wilson, M.  
Wilson, M. W. \*  
Wilson, S.

Wilson, W.  
Wilson, W. M.  
Woodcock, E.  
Wrigglesworth, G.  
Young, C.  
Young, C. C.  
Zimmerman, E.  
Zimmerman, M.  
Zuest, E.

*This list was compiled by the  
Royal Canadian Legion, Pte. Joe  
Waters Branch 136. Every effort  
has been made to ensure its  
accuracy.*

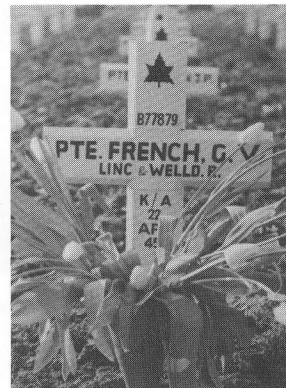
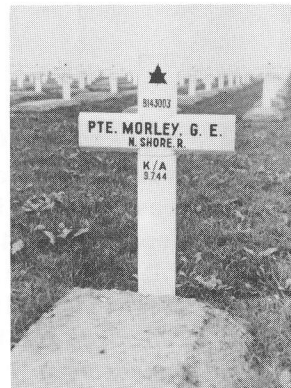
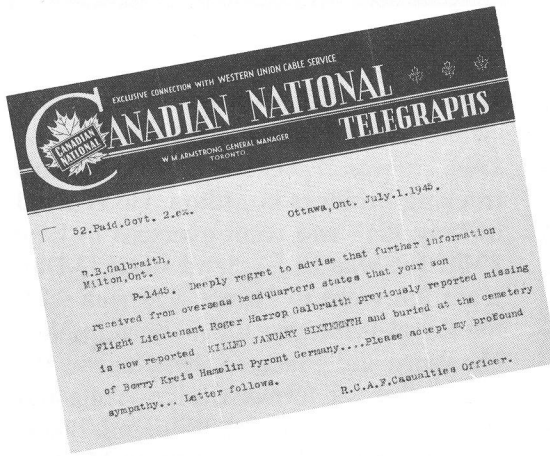




*The Cenotaph at Milton  
in Victoria Park*

# Those lost in service

Friends, neighbours, family members  
– young lives were snuffed out in battles half  
a world away. The loss was shared and  
endured in the Milton community where they  
grew up, were educated, married, worked  
and played sports. Milton and district  
lost 32 young lives.





***RFM Arthur George Auger***

was wounded on July 18, 1944 in the D-Day fighting in France. He recovered and was out of hospital just a few weeks when word of his death was received September 14. He had been shot in France Sept. 4, 1944 while being transferred with a group of soldiers as part of a convoy in the field. RFM Auger had been overseas four months. He went with a reinforcement unit and was later transferred to the Queen's Own Rifles. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Auger of Milton and the husband of the former Laurnette Wilson whom he had married 11 years earlier. He was 31. He is buried at Calais Canadian Military Cemetery, St. Inglevert, France.



***Cpl. Lorne William Black***

was killed in action on September 14, 1944. He was 27. Before enlisting he ran a trucking business in Milton. He enlisted in May 1941 and went overseas in June 1941. He was in England until D-Day when he went to France. He was with the Royal Winnipeg Rifles. Born in New Hamburg and educated there he was the husband of the former Evelyn White and the son of Mr. and Mrs. William J. Black. He is buried at Calais Canadian Military Cemetery, St. Inglevert, France.



***Sgt. Walter Beaty***

was killed in action April 4, 1943. He was 23 years old. His Halifax aircraft failed to return from operations. Warrant Officer Bomb Aimer Beaty has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Runnymede War Memorial, Englefield Green, Egham, Surrey, England. Sgt. Beaty was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Stan Beaty.



***F/O Francis Charles Bowring***

was killed in action May 11, 1944. He was 23. Born in Milton he enlisted in September 1941. He was employed by P.L. Robertson Mfg. Co. He went overseas in March 1943 and served for a short time in Africa. He was later attached to a squadron in Italy. His Baltimore aircraft hit the sea just off shore and came to rest on a beach two miles north-west of Termoli, Italy. He had been on armed reconnaissance over the roads in the Anezzano and Foligna areas. He was the husband of the former Helen Dear and son of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Bowring.



***P/O John R. Clements***

was killed September 15, 1941. He was Milton's first war casualty and was 26. He enlisted from North Bay in September 1940 and flew a bomber to England, landing there in July 1941. He graduated from the University of Toronto in 1938 and had worked at the Hollinger Mines as an engineer. The crew of his Manchester aircraft was engaged in a training flight when they crashed near Lincoln at South Hykeham, England. He is buried in St. Michael Churchyard at Waddington, Lincolnshire, England. He was the only son of Postmaster R. M. and Mrs. Clements.



***Cpl. William Alexander Coxe***

was killed in action July 22, 1943 while serving in Sicily. He was 23. He enlisted early in 1940 and went overseas in June of the following year. He was one of Milton's star junior hockey and baseball players. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Coxe. He is buried in the Agira War Cemetery, Sicily.



***Sgt. John A. Collis***

was killed in action July 26, 1944. Born in Lowville he attended school in Milton. He was 28. A member of the Lorne Scots before the outbreak of war he enlisted shortly afterward. He volunteered for the paratroops and went overseas early in December 1943. He was killed while serving in France and was the holder of the Canadian Efficiency Medal and first clasp. He was the son of George Collis of Milton.



***Pte. Kenneth Albert Coxe***

was killed in action December 6, 1944 while serving in Holland. He was raised in Milton and drove one of the transport trucks of Milton Brick Co. He had been in the army for about a year and went overseas early in September 1944. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Coxe and husband of the former Teresa Quinn. There were two children, Kenneth and Carol Ann, all of Oakville.





***Flt. Sgt. Wallace Edward Dillow***  
was killed in action December 29, 1943. He was 20 when his Halifax aircraft was shot down near Berlin at Doberitz, Germany during night operations. He graduated as air gunner Oct. 22, 1942 and went overseas in January 1943. Formerly of North Bay, he had been married to the former Delores Prior about two years. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. G. Dillow, Milton, formerly North Bay. He was buried at Doberitz, exhumed and reburied in the Berlin War Cemetery, Charlottenburg, Germany.



***P/O Clarence Irving Elsley***  
was killed in action March 16, 1944. He was 21. A member of #420 Snowy Owl Squadron, the target was Stuttgart, Germany. His Halifax aircraft was missing during the night operation and he and seven others were killed. From Moffat Ontario, Pilot Officer Pilot Elsley is buried in the War Cemetery at Durnbach, Germany.



***P/O Earle Dolby, D.F.C.***  
was killed in action September 1, 1943. He was 21. He was commissioned early in 1943 and awarded the D.F.C. in August. His name was mentioned in numerous dispatches regarding bombing raids over France and Germany. His Lancaster aircraft was shot down at Zehrendorf, Germany during a night operation to Berlin. The son of Mr. and Mrs. George Dolby he was buried in the Wehrmacht Cemetery at Zehrendorf, exhumed and reburied in the Berlin War Cemetery, Charlottenburg, Germany.



***Pte. Howard R. Ezeard***  
was killed in action September 1, 1944. He was 21. He was with the 4th Princess Louise Dragoon Guards, R.C.I.C. and was serving in the Gothic line, his sister Mrs. Eddie Wedge, Milton, was informed. He enlisted in December 1943 and went overseas in June 1944. Born in Kleinburg, he was the youngest son of the late Mr. and Mrs. Robert Ezeard. He is buried in the War Cemetery at Montecchio, Italy.



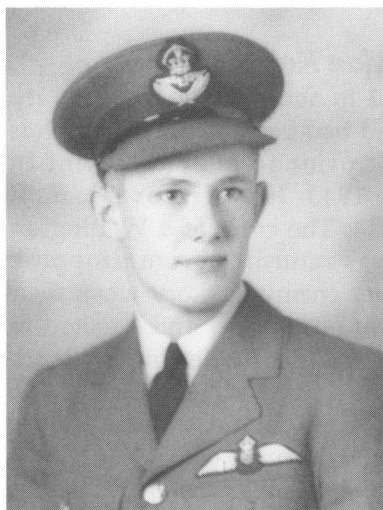
***Pte. Gordon Vincent French***

was killed in action April 22, 1945. Born in Owen Sound he had been in the army two years, first with the R.C.O.C. then with the Lincoln and Welland regiment after going overseas in December 1944. Before enlisting he was at the Beach Proving Range in Burlington as an Inspector of Shells. He was wounded April 11 but returned to duty immediately. News of his death in Germany was ironically received during the rejoicing here at the conclusion of the war with Germany. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Sam French of Burlington, and husband of the former Ruth Batty, Milton. He is buried in the Holten Canadian Military Cemetery, Holten, Holland.



***Pte. John Gibbons***

was killed in action by machine gun March 8, 1945 while serving in Hochwald Forest near Xanten, Germany with the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry. He was earlier with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. Pte. Gibbons had been in the army four years and eight months and had been overseas a year and eight months. He trained at Hamilton, Niagara and Nanaimo. He also served almost two years in Jamaica. He was the son of Elizabeth and the late John Gibbons of Acton and fiancée of Eleanor Waters, Milton. He is buried in the Canadian Military Cemetery at Nijmegen, Holland.



***F/Lt. Roger Harrop Galbraith***

was killed in action January 16, 1945. He was 25. He went overseas in January 1944. He had attended Milton schools and was interested in rugby and running. Before enlisting he was employed by the Bell Telephone Co. at Montreal. His Halifax Aircraft was shot down at Borry Kreis, Hamelin, Germany during a night trip to Magdeburg, Germany. The son of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Galbraith, he is buried in the Limmer British Cemetery, Hanover, Germany.



***Pte. David Edward Harrop***

was killed in action March 8, 1945. He was 19 and had been in the Canadian army for a year. After training at Brampton and Camp Borden he went overseas in July 1944 with the R.H.L.I. The son of Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Harrop he was killed during intensive action at Xanten, Germany. War correspondent Matthew Halton described the action in which 80 men started and 17 came through. David is buried at Nijmegen, Holland in the Canadian Military Cemetery.



***Major T. Jack MacArthur***

was killed in France August 8, 1944. Born in Milton he served with the Lorne Scots, 48th Highlanders and the Royal Regiment of Canada. He went overseas December 1940 and to France July 12, 1944. Prior to his enlistment he was employed by the T. Eaton Co. in Hamilton. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Charles MacArthur.



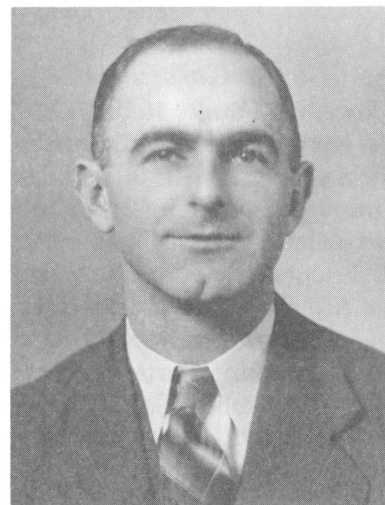
***F/ Sgt. Charles Peter McLaren***

was killed in action June 21, 1945. He was 20. His Dakota aircraft failed to return from dropping supplies to the British 14th Army. He was serving with #435 Chinthe Squadron. Flight Sergeant Wireless Operator Air Gunner McLaren has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Singapore War Memorial, Malaya. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. William McLaren, Campbellville, Ont.



***Flt. Lieut. Donald Scott MacNabb***

was killed in action February 23, 1945. Prior to enlisting he was teaching school. He joined the R.C.A.F. and trained at Fingal and Rivers Alberta. He was overseas a year. The crew of a Halifax aircraft was engaged in a training flight when the pilot attempted a three engine landing. A second engine failed and the aircraft crashed at Londonderry, Yorkshire. He was the only son of Mrs. A. L. MacNabb. He is buried in the Stonefall Cemetery, Wetherby Rd., Harrogate, Yorkshire, England.



***Sgt. Gordon Keith McLellan***

was killed in action May 15, 1944. He was 33 and had been employed at West End Meat prior to his enlistment in February 1943. He went overseas in March 1944. The crew of a Wellington aircraft was returning from dropping leaflets over enemy territory when their aircraft ran out of fuel and crashed at Thoresby Park near Ollerton, England. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. D.G. McLellan of Acton and husband of the former Anne Drennan who was organist at St. Paul's United Church. He is buried in Stonefall Cemetery, Wetherby Road, Harrogate, Yorkshire, England.





***Pte. J. Delmer Mills***

died Aug. 20, 1944 of wounds sustained in action in France. Pte. James Delmar Mills, 19, a Canadian paratrooper, died of wounds received during the invasion. His wife, the former Dorothy Pettigrew, Milton, was informed. He enlisted August 30, 1943. After training at Camp Borden he went overseas in April 1944. He was employed in Milton at the Model Knitting Mills. He is buried in Ranville British Cemetery, France. His parents, Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Mills lived at Carlisle.



***Pte. Lionel S. Muddle***

was lost at sea in July, 1943 when a troopship was sunk on its way to Italy. He had gone overseas in June, 1941 with the transport section of the Lorne Scots. A bachelor, Private Muddle joined the regiment before it was mobilized for active service. His name appears on the Canadian memorial at Cassino, Italy.



***Pte. George Edward Morley***

was killed in France July 9, 1944. He enlisted on his 18th birthday February 22, 1943. Prior to that he was employed at the Model Knitting Mills and in the family butcher shop in Milton. He went overseas in May 1944 and was stationed in England until July 2, 1944 when he joined in the invasion of France. He landed in France on July 3 and six days later he was killed in action. He served with the North Shore (NB) Regiment. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Morley of Milton. He is buried at Beny-sur-Mer Canadian Military Cemetery, France.



***Pte. Albert Parsons***

was killed in action June 7, 1944. He was 24 and was serving with The Highland Light Infantry of Canada, R.C.I.C. Albert was the son of Richard and Lillian Parsons and husband of Margaret Mary Parsons, of Halifax, Nova Scotia. He is buried at Beny-sur-Mer Canadian War Cemetery, France.





***Spr. John James Robertson***

was killed in action August 8, 1944. He was 23. Born in Hornby he attended Milton High School and was employed at the P.L. Robertson Mfg. Co. He played hockey with the junior team and the P.L. Robertson team. He enlisted in September 1942 with the Engineers and went overseas in October 1943. He was stationed in England until mid-July when he went to France as part of the invasion. He was the son of Mrs. Gladys Robertson, Hornby, and husband of the former Elma Randell, Milton.



***Sgt. William O. Snow***

was killed in action September 16, 1942. He was 23. Born in Milton and educated in Milton and Western Technical School in Toronto he was an electrician prior to enlistment. His Lancaster aircraft failed to return from night operations. He had taken part in a number of bombing raids over Germany and had previously been forced to bail out of a damaged bomber plane. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Wilfred Snow. He was posthumously awarded Gold Operational Wings for gallantry in action. He has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Runnymede War Memorial, Englefield Green, Egham, Surrey, England.



***Sgt. William Douglas Scott***

was killed in action November 11, 1943. He was 21. The crew of a Sunderland aircraft was returning from anti-sub patrol and the pilot attempted a night landing in a rough sea. The aircraft crashed and sank at Lough Erne, Ireland. Doug Scott enlisted in September 1941. He had played on the Milton juvenile, midget and junior O.H.A. hockey teams. He is buried in Irvinestown, County Fermanagh, Ireland. He was posthumously awarded Gold Operational Wings for gallantry in action. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Wm. M. Scott.



***Pte. Ivan Teeple***

was killed in action October 11, 1944 in Belgium. He enlisted early in 1943 and went overseas as a driver in May of that year. He transferred to the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders and was reported wounded August 11. He returned to action October 1. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. James Teeple of Westover where Ivan was born and educated.



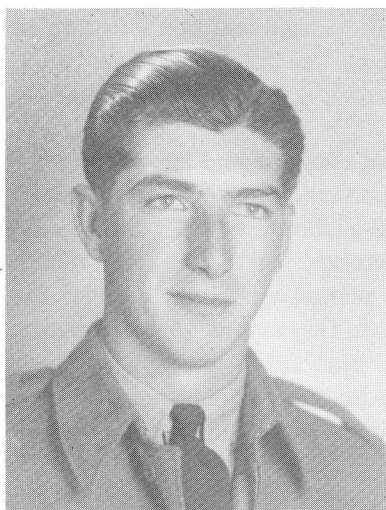
***Pte. Carl Orville Turner***

was killed in action August 19, 1942. He was 22. Born at Omagh he enlisted July 18, 1940 after serving in the Lorne Scots Militia 1939-40. He served with the R.H.L.I., going overseas in 1940. He embarked from the U.K. for France Aug. 18, 1942 in the Jubilee action (Dieppe). He was reported missing in action July 19 and finally presumed killed. Cpl. S. Rimes wrote from a Prisoner of War camp that the boat Pte. Turner was in was carrying explosives and was blown up. He was the son of Mrs. Edna Turner of Oakville and later Toronto. No body was recovered. His name is inscribed on Brook-wood Memorial, in the Brookwood Military Cemetery, England.



***RFM. Donald Alexander Wilson***

was killed in action June 11, 1944. He was 20. Prior to enlistment in April 1943 he was employed as a machine operator at P. L. Robertson Mfg. Co. He went overseas in November 1943. He participated in the invasion of Europe with the Queen's Own Rifles June 6, 1944 and was reported missing in action June 11 and later confirmed killed. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. David Wilson, Milton. First buried near Le Mesnil-Patry, (Normandy) he was later buried in Beny-sur-Mer Cemetery, France.



***Pte. Frank J. Weller***

was killed in action October 5, 1944. He was 21. He enlisted December 11, 1941 in the R.C.A. and served with the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada. In April 1944 he went overseas. He was killed in action in Belgium near Brasschaet. The son of Mr. and Mrs. F. J. Weller of Hornby, he had worked with them in the market garden operation at their farm. He is buried at Bergen op Zoom Canadian Military Cemetery, 4 miles northeast of Bergen op Zoom, Holland.



***Sgt. Marshall William Wilson***

was killed August 3, 1945 in a traffic accident involving a jeep and a truck while serving overseas. "Bus" joined the Canadian Provost Corps in September 1939. He was serving at Aldershot in England at the time of his death. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. William J. Wilson whose home was at Kelso (Robertson Lime Kilns). He is buried in Brookwood Military Cemetery, England.

**M**ILTON'S ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION, Private Joe Waters Branch 136 is well past its 60th anniversary but remains active and deeply involved in community projects.

It was in 1929 that a group of World War I veterans were granted their charter. A small group of men met in a room above Clements Hardware Store on Main Street (now Delacourt's Gift Shop). The group later met over John MacKenzie's Drug Store (212 Main St.) and in 1936 they relocated to the "old shoe factory" on Main St. (now the Lido Restaurant building).

Bingo was a major source of raising funds but in those days prizes were items such as lamps, food hampers, household goods and staples.

A great deal of effort was directed to helping war widows and their children and other veterans and their families. This was financed through the Poppy Fund.



On December 13, 1938 the executive of the time agreed to purchase the present property for \$2,500. On April 19, 1939, the executive held its first meeting in their new facility.

During the war years the club rooms were used by the Red Cross, IODE and other organizations working in the war effort. Following the end of the war interest in the Legion increased and membership grew with returning veterans.

The building has been changed and expanded over the years. A major addition was made in 1957 and members were personally involved in the labour.

In 1983 a charter member, Joe Waters, was recognized when the branch was named after him. He was the faithful bugler at Remembrance Day events for many years. A portrait of him hangs in the branch.

The Royal Canadian Legion has continued to be a strong, influential organization in service to its members, all veterans and the community.

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